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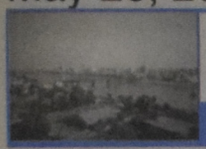

The war about the war in Iraq p.10

The misery of the missing key p.12

58th year of publication

Restorative justice a key to healing communities, says chaplain

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Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Restorative justice is a burning issue for Rev. George Addison, the ecumenical chaplain at Brock University, in St. Catharines. Canada's justice and corrections system is "terribly plugged up, terribly cumbersome," he says, but restorative justice offers some practices that could greatly improve the system.

Addison's interest in restorative justice goes back many years. "Shortly after I was ordained, I was offered the opportunity to work as a chaplain at the Guelph Correctional Centre on behalf of my denomination," he explains. Since then, his interest in the justice and corrections system has grown, and he has continued to be involved with it. "Just seeing persons who were going back to their communities with all the same problems that they brought" made him look for ways to change the system.

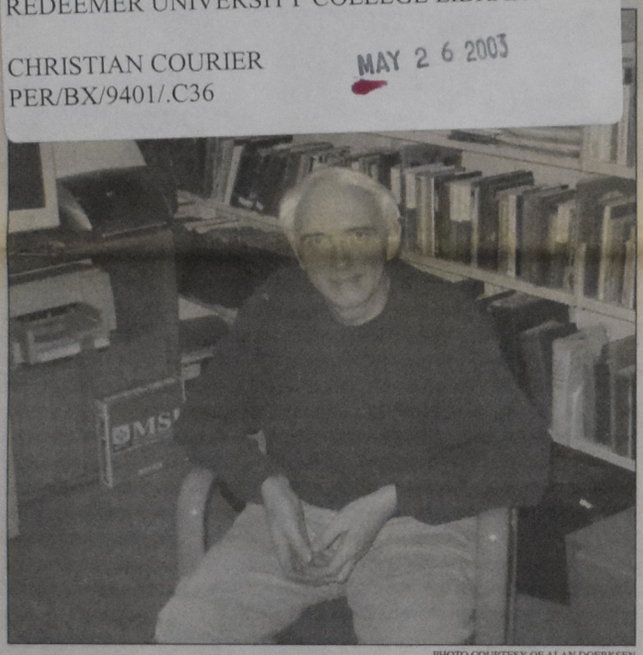


PHOTO COURTESY OF ALAN DOERKSEN

Rev. George Addison, ecumenical chaplain at Brock University, St. Catharines.

Critical of justice system

Addison is critical of some aspects of the justice system. "A lot of people feel really alienated from it, especially victims, but also offenders.... The system just does not listen to people. Almost everybody we've got in jail is going to get out, and they tend to go back to the same situations because they've made no progress. Everything's been put on hold during that time in jail.

"It's very frustrating because only a few people are rehabilitated in the system as we have it. People working within it are just desperate, eager for new ideas and new ways to make an impact on youth who are at risk."

Addison describes the current justice system as very adversarial. "The victim looks at it and says, 'You've given all the rights to the criminal.'" Victims are frustrated with the system because they don't have a voice.

Addison is very interested in community initiatives "to get the public back into the justice system, which has gotten way over-specialized." He wants to see more restorative, rather than retributive, justice, that is, more of an emphasis on healing rather than punishment.

Family group conferencing

Family group conferencing (FGC) is one restorative justice practice Addison is enthusiastic about. As a trained facilitator, he has been training others in how to practice FGC.

FGC is often compared to the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program (run by Mennonite Central Committee), which Addison says is "a really excellent program." However, he speculates that the FGC may be more palatable, because the RCMP use the model. "Rather than victims and offenders talking to each other, which can put victims on the spot

see RESTORATIVE page 2...

New World, New Church Conference

Peter Schuurman

About 250 pastors, church staff, and students gathered at Lambrick Park Church in Victoria BC to investigate cultural changes and their impact on the church. "Shifting Realities: New World, New Church," was the title of the two day "unconference" (May 1,2) sponsored by Emergent Canada and hosted by "The Place"–Lambrick Park's alternative-style community church. The featured speaker was Brian McLaren, pastor and author of numerous books including *A New Kind of Christian, The Story We Find Ourselves In*, and *Re-inventing Your Church*. His theme for the conference, which is the same as the theme in his books, is that the 21st century poses critical challenges that require a creative response from the church. A new world calls for a new church, new leadership, and a new theology. McLaren had one presentation for each of these topics.

Postmodern Shift

The new world has been called the postmodern world, a distinct shift from the taken-for-granted norms of the last 500 years. McLaren insisted that the magnitude of this cultural transition could not be underestimated, making an analogy with Hurricane Mitch which swept through Honduras and altered the entire landscape in a matter of hours. This new world of airplanes, nuclear weapons, television, and militant fundamentalism cries for a message of hope and wisdom from God's people, he concluded.

When McLaren presented on the new church, he gave 13 suggestions for what he called "deep ecclesiology." Most of these were further elaborations of the first point, which was the declaration that in these times "there is no one model." Church comes in many forms and many different layers, has varied life spans, most of which are usually conditioned by local needs, gifts, and visions. "Bigger is not better" said McLaren, emphasizing that whatever the postmodern church would be, it would have to be creative, flexible, and authentic to local culture. He criticized the consumer model of church being "all about me" and insisted that people see themselves in a church that is, ultimately, for the world.

New Dorothy Leaders

The new leaders of this church would be, first of all, missional in their approach, he continued. This will require a re-setting of expectations in the congregation. Using *The Wizard of Oz* characters as an illustration, he said that rather than the "Wizard" leader of days

see CONFERENCE page 2...

News

Restorative Justice ...continued from page 1

and put pressure on the victim to forgive, the FGC is way more objective than that."

Generally, FGC is used for youth crimes, first offenders, nonviolent crimes which are clogging up the courts, explains Addison. One example would be schoolyard bullying. But he feels it can also be used for more serious crimes.

"If a person is going to plead guilty and go to a conference, a facilitator – sometimes a police officer, sometimes myself – gets together with the convicts. It always involves the victim or victims, the victims' families, friends or people who witnessed the event. . . . So, you've got all the people who were there. Then you've got the offender, the offender's family, the offender's friends. We sit in a big circle. It's highly scripted. We go through the questions.

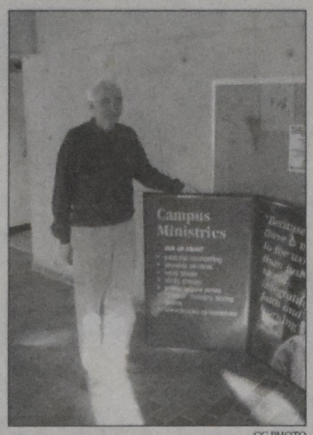
"We start with the offender: How are you feeling about what happened? They get a chance to say their piece.

"Then we go to the victim, then the victim's family. People start seeing how this event affected all kinds of things: people have stopped speaking to each other, families aren't getting along, and they can't all go to the same church. All kinds of stuff happens because of these events. If we didn't have an opportunity to bring in some fresh air, they might never be resolved. So, gradually, we go through and hear everybody.

Enormous effect

"Usually this has an enormous effect on everyone. The offenders sense the enormity and severity of what they've done. The victim has a sense of support, encouragement and apology. Friends have a forum in which they can say that they really love this person. Then people get to talk about what should be done. Generally, we come to a consensus about what would be a reasonable outcome. It often involves paying something, doing some work, apologizing, a range of other things, including community service."

Often, such conferences are hosted in a church, which can be a comfortable setting, says Addison. "Afterwards, people break bread together while the facilitator goes off and writes a document which everybody signs, and that's the conference."



George Addison at Brock U. CC PHOTO

Ancient Maori tradition

FGC is based on an ancient Maori tradition, says Addison. "When the British authorities went into Maori communities and would take them out to white men's court, they thought this was absolutely barbaric!"But now, FGC is being used again in New Zealand, where it originated, and in Australia.

In countries where FGC is being used, "the studies that have been done show enormous satisfaction with these conferences," says Addison. "Also the recidivism rate is lower."

The new Youth Justice Act recently introduced by the Canadian government contains a provision which offers FGC as one of the alternatives which can be used, says Addison. He hopes that people within the justice system will use it. "One of the hopeful signs I see is the number of people trying it out."

Addison enjoys discussing restorative practices such as FGC with educators, and would like to see Brock University and Niagara College offer programs to introduce them.

Restorative justice is "at the core of all great religious ideas," says Addison. "In ancient days, when the ancients began to struggle with and listen to God as to how to solve issues like blood feuds, they developed modes of justice." Examples of both restorative and retributive justice can be found in the Old Testament, he notes.

Changing lenses

Comparing the two types of justice, Addison describes restorative justice as "changing lenses." "It's a different way of looking at problems of justice. If you look at it through a retributive lens ('If you do this, we will do that.), you separate people. You bring in a larger force. That may be necessary. Everybody needs some kind of authority they can accept – such as government, police or armies."

In contrast, a restorative lens sees a crime as "a problem that's creating injustice like ripples going out." Right relationships between people and with God need to be restored. "The answer to crime problems is to put community back together – heal rather than punish," contends Addison.

Communities should offer more support to ex-offenders, he suggests. He gives examples of how this can work. "The provincial multi-faith council set up a group called a reintegration project, which has little support groups for people coming out of jail.

"Native communities are always really good at that. When you're out at Six Nations [Indian reservation] and someone comes out of white man's jail, they'll have a party for them. There's a sense that you've paid your time – it's time to come back. That, too, is a restorative practice. It allows healing to take place."

Restorative justice is better than "putting offenders in the trash can of old, outmoded ideas," insists Addison. "We need to rebuild our shattered community in so many ways. We need to seek for new ways to do justice and walk humbly."

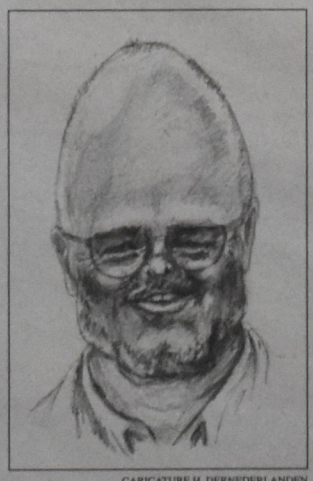
Churches can help with restorative justice by providing opportunities for offenders to do community service, Addison suggests.

Addison acknowledges that restorative justice is not the "front door" of his current chaplaincy work at Brock. "I'm doing this as a volunteer," he explains. But it does affect his approach to campus chaplaincy work. "What lens do you have when someone comes to talk to you? Your approach is restorative."

"I think anybody who's a person of faith can use restorative practices in their life." Some examples he mentions are in dealing with problems with a fellow employee or resolving family conflicts. "These practices are about truth-telling, honesty in communications, highly-developed communication skills and a healing outcome, which seem to me to be really important."

Conference

....continued from p.1



CARICATURE H. DERNEDERLANDEN

Brian McLaren

past, (who was the broadcaster, technician, careerist, Bible analyst, manager and warrior), the new leader would be more Dorothy-like: a listener, sage, farmer, and spiritual friend who accompanies her team on a perilous journey. Rather than a problem solver, who is the knower, the apologist, and the model, the new leader is more like an advanced student who creates problems, inspires, dreams, and collaborates. The new leader lives the Christian life in a small community of missionally-minded co-leaders who move forward, following Christ, as the rest of the larger Christian community follows behind.

Finally, a new theology. Here McLaren listed four "turnings" towards the future. The first was a re-definition of theology itself. Theology no longer will be "a systematic outline of truth, proposition extracted from the text, through technique, to create a Biblical worldview." Instead, it will become more of "an on-going creative human enterprise of making models of the universe based on beliefs about God." McLaren emphasized the frailty of all symbols, quoting Gregory of Nyssa: "Only wonder understands. Concepts create idols."

Salvation as Restoration

Another important turning, says McLaren, will be more varied understandings of the atonement. He named five different theories of the atonement from church history, and explained how the Anselmian model of penal substitution has dominated modern theology. The penal interpretation is cradled in legalistic metaphor, one modeled on the court, he elaborated. Other models, which focus on atonement as healing and restoration, for example, connote a medical model, which may find deeper roots in broken hearts today.

A third turning comes in the area of eschatology. "Hell ate the gospel," he quipped, suggesting that salvation is for the world, not against it or from it. Salvation works to bless the world and is not only for a select group to be blessed by God. Election, he said, is not about privilege, but responsibility. McLaren also posed a re-orientation in terms of our understanding of time. We need to see God's kingdom, with all its promise, inviting us in the present to receive the gifts of God's future, rather than see ourselves pushed by a past, which causally determines our future from behind. "The kingdom of God is at hand," he quoted, emphasizing that our task is not to build, but to enter.

The final turning comes in terms of our view of Scripture. McLaren suggested some literalistic views of the Bible have more in common with Islam than they do with Christian tradition. This is a scripture of inerrant facts and inflexible certainties. Scripture can also be seen in three other ways, he explained. It can be seen as an art gallery of artifacts from people who have known God through the centuries, as a community-creating text that argues with itself as it expands, or, finally, as the end or beginning of wisdom. In sum, Scripture is not a "phone book" of verities, but a guidebook for students who want to learn more about God's relationship with his world.

continued on page 3 ...

Politics

Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Breakthrough in Cyprus at last?

Two months ago the latest effort to unify Cyprus failed, and it looked as if the best opportunity in a generation had been lost. Thus it was all the more astonishing that, on April 23, the Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas suddenly decided to open the so-called green line that has bisected the island since the troubles of 1974.

Within a short time thousands were lined up to cross at three checkpoints, with Greeks heading north, often to look for their former homes abandoned nearly three decades ago; and with Turks heading south, frequently to secure birth certificates and passports, thus giving them European Union citizenship when Cyprus joins officially next year. As of this writing there has been only a single violent incident, and the mingling of the two ethnic populations has been accompanied by a huge outpouring of good will and euphoria.

Dramatic stories are now coming out, as particularly Greek Cypriots have located their old homes, many now inhabited by Turkish Cypriot families. These encounters, far from being rancorous, have often been joyful, as Greeks have returned south with cherished family heirlooms and even long lost photographs of loved ones. There will undoubtedly be difficult times ahead as Cypriots adjust to these altered circumstances, particularly as authorities on both sides deal with matters relating to compensation for lost property and the status of illegal settlers from the Turkish mainland.

There is, of course, no guarantee that the checkpoints will remain open. Any violent episodes publicized by the media could close them again. But for now Greek Cypriots are frequenting the cafés in Kyrenia on the north coast for the first time in more than a generation.

Why now? By all accounts Denktas had been under considerable pressure to make a confidence-building move – from his own people, who overwhelmingly favor unification; from Ankara, which is trying to make a case for its own membership in the EU; and even from Denktas' son Serdar, who believed it was time for his father to bend a bit.

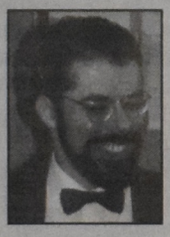
Iraq connection

Moreover, one of my own sources in the region tells me there may be a connection between the recent war in Iraq and the breach of the green line. In the runup to the American and British attack in March, the Turkish parliament voted not to permit coalition forces to use its own territory, much to Washington's irritation. As a consequence the US decided to withhold billions of dollars of foreign aid earmarked for Turkey, which had been tied to that country's cooperation.

Thus, as a way of making amends and perhaps receiving some of this aid after all, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan appears to have put some pressure on Denktas, whose flexibility would go some way towards solving the long stalemate. Erdogan's efforts would please virtually everyone: the US, the United Nations and the EU – not to mention the Cypriot people themselves.

Assuming this outpouring of popular enthusiasm can be channeled into a revival of unification talks, one of the more glaring injustices resulting from the events of 1974 can fairly readily be rectified: the once heavily touristed Varosha section of Famagusta can be returned to its Greek Cypriot inhabitants. As no one currently lives there, none would be dispossessed of informally occupied homes.

As I said earlier, the green line could be closed again. But it would come in the face of huge popular sentiment to the contrary. Now is the time to build on the current momentum and to move beyond past animosities.



David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, and would love at last to visit his father's home village of Koma tou Yalou in the north.

Christian Stewardship Services serves 34 partner organizations

(News Release) – At the 27th Annual meeting of Christian Stewardship Services (CSS), Bill van Staalduinen, Chairman of the Board welcomed 47 delegates, guests and staff representing 34 Partnering organizations, ministries and charities (Partners) from across Canada and the United States. The meeting was held May 2, 2003 on the campus of Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

In his report to the delegates, Henry Eygenraam, Executive Director of CSS told the delegates that CSS had provided gifts to Partners with some $560,000 in endowments, scholarships and operating funds in the year ending June 30, 2002. In total CSS has received just under $2 million in deposits and other funds in the past year. The income from these funds will be used primarily to fund the work of Partner organizations in various ways. "We are looking forward to an increase in our payments to Partners as the full impact of new regional representatives is felt", said Henry Eygenraam during his presentation. Three regional representatives have been appointed to CSS in the last 12 months; one serving Eastern Ontario and the Maritimes and resident in Ottawa, one in Alberta and resident in Edmonton and one in British Columbia, resident in Surrey. Plans are to add one more representative for South Western Ontario in the near future.

Christian Stewardship Services, together with its supporting Christian Organizations, promotes Biblical stewardship through planned giving and education. CSS has some $13 million in funds under administration, of which some 40% is invested in mortgages to Christian schools and churches.

For more information contact: Christian Stewardship Services, 600 Alden Rd., Suite 315, Markham, ON L3R 0E7;
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Inspired Pastors

Conference worship was led by Steve Bell, an accomplished guitar player and singer from Winnipeg who has released numerous albums through Signpost music. Other workshops included "A New Kind of Seminary?" "Technology in the Church?" "Writing and Faith," "The Reluctant, Emerging Leader," "Worship as a Journey," and "Expository Preaching: Baby or Bathwater?"

Henri Lock, the United Church chaplain at University of Victoria, attended the conference. "This was an evangelical conference, but the issues raised here are the same as are raised in United Churches," he said. "We know we are in a paradigm shift, and we need a new way of being church, and we don't know what its going to be like. Hopefully we can move forward together."

Rev. Albert Westerhuis, the pastor at Fleetwood CRC, Surry, also was present with his staff. "Refreshing. Challenging. Stimulating," he summarized. "I'm happy to move into these postmodern times. Now we are talking about theology again, and not just church growth techniques."

McLaren ended the conference by thanking his hosts. "Some of this material is for mature audiences only. Thanks for providing a safe place to ask questions. I hope we can make more safe places like this."

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Editorials

Seeing God's presence in the affairs of mankind

Harry der Nederlanden

One of the stories that has loomed large on the editorial pages of newspapers recently is the scandal at the *New York Times*, the premier newspaper in the US. It turns out that one of its young stars has been falsifying stories and he's been getting away with it for quite some time. Some stories claiming to report from the scene, giving vivid descriptions of the setting and quoting those involved, were inventions. He wrote them from home using second-hand information.

The *NY Times* printed a very, very long confession. And other papers have been wondering (the note of glee barely concealed) how could this happen – at the *Times* of all places, with its high standards, with all those high-powered editors? And the autopsies have begun.

One of the culprits blamed for the fiasco is the so-called "new journalism," which has discarded the whole ideal of objectivity and allowed the subjectivity of the writer to come into the foreground. We Reformed folk have also challenged the whole idea of objectivity. No one just sees brute facts; we all see from a certain perspective. My faith, my personal and communal history, my cultural roots, my race, gender, education, class and health – all these things and more influence the way I see and report events and comment on them.

Last issue I ventured some reflections on homosexuality. Those musings were colored not just by my Reformed faith but by the fact that I shared an office with a colleague who was gay and that I had a friend whose son turned out to be gay. My years of working at Pine Rest (a "mental hospital") and seeing how the brokenness of creation has affected some in ways they find nearly impossible to alter by an act of will also played a role. Total restoration is an eschatological reality; gays, like the poor, we will always have with us.

God makes himself visible

No reporting, however, can simply embrace subjectivity and declare, "Here's how I see it from the perspective of my own limited, parochial prejudices. Take it or leave it!" All responsible reporting and commentary strives for a broader viewpoint, one that will expand the reader's horizons. For Christians those horizons are sketched by the Word of God and the story of God's redemptive purposes in human history. In a humble, modest way, Christians are struggling in some sense to peek over God's shoulder at the affairs of mankind. We may never presume to possess that God's-eye perspective, but we are not left to blunder about in the dark. We may hope for more and we must strive for more.

In CC we publish stories about what's happening in Reformed and other evangelical churches, but we are also interested in what the Spirit is doing in mainline churches and in the Roman Catholic Church. The church of Christ is, however, global. And as such it is a church under the cross, a persecuted church, so we devote a couple of pages in every issue to make ourselves aware of the worries and wounds of the church around the world.

But the work of the kingdom of God is not confined to the church. There are numerous institutions and organizations committed to bring a specific, concrete witness to the difference that belief and hope in Christ makes to the everyday doings of human beings in the world. So we try to tell some of those stories too.

Although God makes himself visible most clearly in the ministry of God's people in and through the church and other Christian institutions, we know that he does not confine his activity there. If he did, the world would long ago have collapsed in on itself like a house riddled with termites. Through his creation order, through the work of the Holy Spirit and his presence in the human conscience, he is constantly and lovingly wrestling with his human creatures, his image-bearers, far outside the boundaries of Christendom and far beyond the reach of the church.

God is our ecosystem

Our feeble words convert no one. Our tainted efforts at embodying in some way the renewing, healing power of the Word of God restores no one to integrity. It is only because God is there first, impinging on the lives of all men and women everywhere that our words and our imperfect efforts to make it real make any sense whatsoever to those outside the body of Christ.

He is the primary ecosystem of all humanity. He whispers to all peoples in the beating of their hearts, in their pangs of conscience, in their hunger for food and for justice, in their love for their children, in their desire for freedom, in their music and their dancing, in their dreams of the future and their yearnings for deeper meaning and for peaceful, hospitable communities. God is not far away. He is close as a pain in the gut and as the touch of your own child.

Even though I attended a Christian school for only three years, I had learned all this before I was sent off to college, from my parents and from the solidly Reformed preaching and writing that was made available to me. The night before my wedding I was still working furiously on a philosophy paper that sought to show how God's truth speaks to us in the writings of the aggressively atheistic philosopher J-P Sartre. [Even though I took Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* with me on my honeymoon, I confess, I never finished the paper.]

Being prophetic

Even before the advent of the "hermeneutic of suspicion" which taught us to discover the perverse motives of class, power, gender and self-seeking desire in all the works of our hands, especially in those works that have taken on institutional form and acquired status and authority, we Reformed folk had already discovered the power of critique. Following Kuyper, we called it "architectonic critique." By this we meant that untruth and sin could become embedded in the very structures of society and in the very forms of our feeling and thinking. This happens at a deeper level than our teachings and beliefs. Hendrik Hart wrote a pamphlet entitled *The American Way of Death* in the '60s to disabuse Americans of the notion that their traditions and their way of life was Christian from the ground up. We called this kind of writing "prophetic." It exposes the ground motives, the principalities and powers vying for our allegiance, not just in the media but in the very institutions that structure our lives, in the very patterns of living we take as given.

Some of the quarrels – good fights – we've had in this paper lately concern this double perspective, especially in the policies of President Bush and the US. Some see only dark, sinister forces at work in US foreign policy (and elsewhere) and speak ominously of empire and idolatry. They're right, I think. But one-sided. And this kind of one-sidedness has a cost. Over the long haul it breeds cynicism. Or a radicalism that always positions itself outside of existing institutions and organizations because these are always already compromised, part of the problem, not the solution. If our vision becomes too dark, too negative, too apocalyptic, we will be declaring this world belongs not to God but to Satan and his minions.

It is also our calling to look for God's presence. Even in the works of those we are working against. Remember how everyone was warning that if Iraq was attacked Saddam would release plagues and poisons upon the world and blow up all his oil wells to shroud the globe in a black cloud? It didn't happen. The American military took credit for that. But maybe it was because, wicked as he was, Saddam wasn't that wicked. Maybe God stayed his hand....

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF
Editor: Harry der Nederlanden
editor@christiancourier.ca;
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden
Subscriptions@christiancourier.ca;
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
accounts@christiancourier.ca

REGIONAL REPORTERS
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Let's not stop pursuing purity and holiness

Your May 12 editorial on same-sex couples struck me as a carefully and sensitively written editorial. You must have labored over this many hours. I want to commend you for openly struggling with this complex issue. Your tone suggests that you are willing to be persuaded either way as long as the argument is Christ-centered. You put certain questions before us which are very difficult to lay aside. At the same time, you come through with a tentative position which will lead to accepting First Toronto CRC's position, something which Classis Toronto has so far rejected.

I conclude from your editorial that the heart of your position can be found in the question how to "uphold sex within marriage as the (much transgressed against) norm and at the same time accept a formalized kind of partnership for homosexuals as an emergency institution, an accommodation to our weakness." We could broaden this question and say, How do we uphold any norm, which is always much transgressed against, and at the same time make room in the church for sinners? (A quick aside — the frequency of transgression against a norm does nothing to diminish its luster as a guiding principle for life.)

In a somewhat flippant way, we could say that your question has to do with loving the sinner and hating the sin. But achieving that is a very tall order. Your examples of how the church has dealt with divorce is a case in point. God hates divorce and so should we. But there comes a point where things break down and what you have left is the ruins of a marriage. Should the stigma of those ruins always stay with divorced persons? Allow me to refer to a New Testament story I read yesterday about that fascinating exchange that took place in Sychar between Jesus and a Samaritan woman.

A life-changing encounter

Jesus knew that the woman who came to the well where he was resting had gone through five husbands. Did all of those husbands die or did some of those husbands divorce her? (She herself could not have divorced them since Jews and Samaritans did not give that power to women.) We don't know. But we do know that the man she was living with at the time that Jesus met her was not her husband. In other words, she was living in sin.

Jesus is very direct with her and exposes her weak spot. But he did so not to hurt her but to heal her. He wants her to drink the living water that he represents so that her thirst for happiness will forever be quenched.

We can tell from her happy behavior afterwards that she did not feel judged. She even said to her townspeople that this man at the well had told her all she had ever done (notice she did not act the victim by saying, all the awful things that have happened to me). "Could this be the Christ?" she asked fervently.

We don't know what happened to the woman after this. But I have a hard time believing that she went on living as if nothing had happened. I suggest that she either got married or she left the man she was living with. When you meet the Christ, things change.

Seek holiness

I'm convinced that the church has not always dealt wisely with divorced people. We err either on the side of condemning divorced people or on the side of closing our eyes to the sinful reality of divorce. It's not easy to love the sinner and hate the sin. It's even harder to do that when the sin is ours.

By all means, let gay persons form supportive friendships and partnerships. But don't deprive them of the challenge to pursue holiness and purity.

You are so right in pointing out that "those of us who are faithful to our marriage vows, who do not steal or murder, who are gainfully employed and who vote and pay our taxes — moral middle class folks — fall far short of what Christ demands of us. Yes, but even with that handicap, we must still uphold the purity and holiness, which "is found first of all not in us but in him." In other words, we must not only *find* purity and holiness in Christ, but we must also *pursue* it in all humility.

What witness is left to the church if we make all kinds of emergency accommodations to sin? Aren't we in danger of becoming softer and softer like overly ripe plums to the point of becoming mushy? Emergency accommodations have a habit of becoming the rule.

Our true identity

What is Toronto First after? Why does it want to push the envelope of accommodation to the point of allowing practising homosexuals to become deacons, elders and, of course, eventually pastors. The elders won't be sent to classis . . . for now. But that's just a matter of time. Eventually, that non-delegation will be seen as an affront to our gay members.

At the heart of this push from First Toronto lies, I believe, the idea that homosexual people derive their deepest identity from their sexual orientation. I know that from discussions I have had with members of AWARE in Toronto. If they are right, if their true identity lies in their sexual orientation, then we must allow them to become deacons, elders and pastors, no doubt about it. But if they are wrong, and the reports of Synod 1973 and 2002 say they are wrong, then we should be able to draw the line without feeling that we have committed a sin against their personhood.

In the report of Synod 2001 we read: "The ministry of the church to persons with same-sex attractions begins with enfolding these persons into community while at the same time sounding the message of the gospel that one's sexual identity is not one's deepest and true identity. One's core identity must not be hostage to one's sexual identity or orientation. The enduring message of the gospel is that male or female, American or Canadian, homosexual or heterosexual, disabled or well-bodied – none of these adjectives define who we truly are. These words describe some aspect of ourselves, but they are adjectives, not nouns. Even our moral behavior no longer defines us when we are born again in Christ."

Isn't it liberating to know that our true identity lies in Christ and not in our sinful self? Scripture is clear: those who find their identity in their sinful self will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

A fruit of the Spirit

On a final note: celibacy is something that we expect not only from homosexual brothers and sisters but also from never-married singles, widows and widowers. Celibacy is spoken of as a gift in Scripture but also as a fruit of the Spirit. Again, the report of Synod 2001 is very instructive here: "At the conclusion of his teaching on gifts, Paul instructs us to 'strive for the spiritual gifts' (1 Cor. 14:1). We may seek them and pray for them. Gifts are not some power or special ability that God either gives or does not give to us without possibility of change.... Married people as well as singles need self-control of their sexuality, for a well-disciplined life."

Even though I agree with almost all of your editorial and see it as a very sensitive attempt to be open to the winds of the Spirit, I would answer the question, "Can we uphold sex within marriage as the (much transgressed against) norm and at the same time accept a formalized kind of partnership for homosexuals as an emergency institution, an accommodation to our weakness?" this way: only if these partnerships exclude sexual intercourse. By all means, let gay persons form supportive friendships and partnerships. But don't deprive them of the challenge to pursue holiness and purity. I would continue to uphold celibacy outside marriage as the norm that the Church of Jesus must protect with greater vigor, and that includes pre-marital and extra-marital intercourse.

Bert Witvoet

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Letters/Opinion

Dialogue on empire

Writings by Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat, my friends and colleagues, are always insightful and thought-provoking. I fully agree with the biblical concern motivating their editorial 'Watch Your Tongue,' and with much of the substance. The recent rhetoric coming out of the US government has often been arrogant and has at times been frankly chilling, and Christians certainly should respond to it out of a prophetic vision which attempts to 'speak the truth with the vocabulary of the Kingdom.'

An important item in that vocabulary is indeed the biblical word 'empire.' As they put it: 'our calling is to uncover the lies, expose the rhetoric and symbols of the empire that lead only to death....' But it is not always straightforward to apply biblical terms like this to our contemporary global order. Where is 'empire' to be found today, what is its nature, and how are we to resist it? They imply that it is unambiguously the USA; they speak of 'the American empire.' But how close is the USA today to a biblical 'empire', ancient near-eastern or Roman? Biblical empires, like nineteenth-century European ones, achieved domination by conquest and colonization. But the USA has no colonies and no territorial ambitions on any other nation. When its government says it wants to restore self-government in Iraq and get home as quickly as possible, I believe it.

Further, if there is something today displaying tendencies like a biblical 'empire' it isn't just a single nation, however powerful. It surely must include most of the modern West, of which Canada, Europe, Australia and Japan are fully part. (The most imperial political entity the world has ever seen, the Soviet Union, is now thankfully dead.) These nations and regions are part of an interdependent economic and political system in which all are implicated and from which they cannot easily extricate themselves even if they wanted to. One of the ironies of 'empire' is that the internet facility used by the protesters at Tianenmen Square -- against another 'empire' -- is among its products.

Yet the USA is obviously the dominant global power today and, under this Administration, is increasingly becoming a global bully. How shall we name this? Michael Ignatieff describes the US government's current project as 'empire-lite,' the desire to project and safeguard global political and economic interests without the burden of colonial conquest. That's one useful suggestion. It may not have quite the same prophetic resonance, but applying the unqualified term 'empire' to the USA today – and only the USA – is not nuanced enough.

Nor is this statement: 'any language that results in war solely for the sake of imperial expansion, betrays a fundamental unfaithfulness to God.' Of course. That is clearly intended as a desciption of why the US invaded Iraq, but it isn't an accurate one. That invasion was indeed consistent with the National Security Strategy of September 2002, which certainly projects an unprecedented and hubristic vision of global US dominance, as David Koyzis's excellent article in the same issue makes clear. Yet it was also an attempt to enforce the intent of numerous UN Security Council resolutions against a ruthless and dangerous oppressor when that body increasingly seemed unable to do so, partly because two of its permanent members – France and Russia – have oil interest at stake in Iraq. (I opposed and still oppose the US decision to use unilateral military force.) In the case of Afghanistan, the USA was responding directly to an unprovoked attack on US civilians and the US government itself. I also have significant problems with that response. But the motivation was not imperial expansion, rather legitimate self-defense.

We need to find a 'Kingdom vocabulary' today which expresses the full force of biblical prophecy but also carefully identifies its precise targets. I'm grateful to Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat for their ongoing efforts to provoke us to do so.

Jonathan Chaplin
Professor of Political Theory
at the Institute for Christian Studies

Walsh Replies:

Thanks for your careful and gracious response to our little editorial. The language of empire in the piece was provocative, but not really the main point. We really were talking about language. So the question for me is whether the language out of the American administration is imperial in tone and rhetoric. I think that it is.

Further, it would seem to me that the shift in foreign policy that Koyzis so well addressed in that same issue is clearly imperial in character. I mean, what else but an empire would refer to its own role in the world under the phrase "Pax Americana"?

But you are right that the real imperial force in the world today is the 'west'. Would you be happy to identify that with the nomenclature, global capitalism? How ever we identify the imperial realities of western culture and economics, we still need to think through the role of one particular nation state in that empire – and this is, of course, America.

Concerning the reasons for the US to invade Iraq, I simply don't believe the rhetoric at all. Not one word of it! If the US had real reasons to invade Iraq, then why would it trump up arguments in its rhetoric that have absolutely no basis in fact whatsoever? Why keep on connecting this invasion to 9/11? We all know that there is no connection whatsoever. An administration only needs to construct false arguments when it has no real ones to fall back upon.

But let's be clear about one thing. I do not intend to apply the term empire to America and only America. Its just that America is so blatant about it all, and in the context of this piece, America is using such blasphemous language.

Thanks again, Jonathan. The issue of vocabulary is so important because how we speak both reflects and shapes who we are.

Brian Walsh
CRC chaplain
University of Toronto

Chaplin replies:

Let me first address the US role in Iraq. The reason I think the US wants its forces home as soon as possible is not because the US government says so, but because it's in its interests to do so. It will, however, find that harder to achieve than it thinks, and what it leaves behind will likely not be what it wants – on that we no doubt agree.

But the key issue is why it went to war. In your reply you don't offer an explanation, but in your editorial you implied it was 'Operation Imperial Oil.' To be blunt, this is a materialist analysis which saves us from the difficult task of analyzing the many interacting motivations at work. While securing stable, and cheaper, oil supplies in the region is obviously a major background motivation – and not a wholly illegitimate one, since even poorer countries would benefit from having OPEC's power reduced – it just doesn't explain well enough what has actually happened.

Crucially it overlooks that the US was acting to enforce a succession of UN reso-lutions flagrantly breached by Iraq since 1991. It was not entitled to do so unilaterally, and for that reason I think the invasion was illegal. (I never bought the separate, 9/11 'self-defense' argument, and the embarrassing absence of any evidence of Iraqi WMD so far, confirms the skepticism we both had on that point.) This political factor – the desire to enforce international law, however selectively – cannot be reduced to the economic factor of oil.

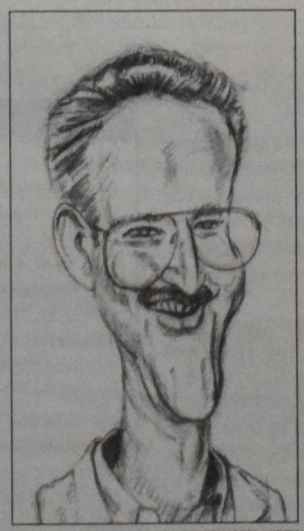


ILLUSTRATION BY H. DERNADERLANDEN

Let me add too that, if we want to see a tougher and more effective regime of international law and governance, then a beefed-up UN might in future intervene against genocidal tyrants like Saddam Hussein on the basis of a developed 'humanitarian intervention' doctrine. If it did, what might happen could look something like what did just happen (though with international legitimacy, and hopefully with a far better post-war plan than we see now). We can't 'rid the world of evil' but we might be able occasionally to remove odious dictators and so protect numerous innocents. But sometimes that would require military intervention, and as long as other nations declined to pull their weight, that role would fall to the USA.

I could agree that current US foreign policy rhetoric and ambition, as described by David Koyzis, is 'imperial' in tone. My reason for issuing cautions about such a term is that, without precise definition, it obscures as much as it explains. That's why I also wouldn't apply it without qualification to 'global capitalism.' Depending on how you define that term, it could also include things like the commercial trading activities of small businesses or community cooperatives in developing countries, or for that matter the ordinary, legitimate activities of non-exploitative private businesses or farms in Canada struggling to produce needed goods or services and keep their employee's jobs going in tough economic times.

You'll recall that, 25 years ago, Bernard Zylstra wrote a fine article called 'Modernity and the American Empire.' There he does refer to the USA as an 'empire,' but only after a careful analysis of the role of empires in modernity which also recognizes the positive role the USA has played in the modern world. Detached from that kind of analysis, the word 'empire' can become a polarizing slogan rather than an illuminating term of analysis. Equally, detached from prophetic critique, even the best analysis can become a mere rationalization.

Jonathan Chaplin

Upholding Biblical Standards

Thank you for your thoughtful editorial on gay partnerships and the church (May 12, 2003). Like you, I want to affirm God's heterosexual design for marriage, and, at the same time, to embrace our gay brothers and sisters within the church. As a way to achieve this goal, you propose that the church (I take it you mean the institutional church) should "accept a formalized kind of partnership for homosexuals as an emergency institution, an accommodation to our weakness," and you adduce current ecclesiastical policies with respect to divorce, and remarriage after divorce, as precedents for such a move.

What bothers me about your proposal (which of course echoes similar proposals that have been current for some time in other communions) is the argumentation by which you back it up. In effect you are saying, "The church has relaxed its standards on divorce, so there's no reason why it cannot do so in the case of gay partnerships as well. After all, in both cases the church has a bad record of pastoral ministry to the people in question." It is not difficult to see that this line of argumentation can be used to justify all kinds of departures from biblical and traditional Christian ethics.

Rather than concede some kind of formal ecclesiastical "right" to a biblically and creationally skewed relationship — a right which will almost inevitably become a precedent for further concessions, given the highly charged political climate in which we live — I believe it would be far better to emphasize the solidarity in sin and grace, especially as regards our sexual lives, which gay and straight Christians share before the face of God.

Let us help each other, with compassion and patience, as we all seek, through stumbling and falling, to live according to God's design. And rather than undermine, let us applaud and encourage the difficult faithfulness of our gay brothers and sisters who strive to observe biblical standards in the face of an unrelenting barrage of secular propaganda.

Al Wolters
Hamilton, Ont.

Reply:

Thank you for your correction. If my editorial leaves the impression that it is primarily a plea for relaxing standards, then I deserve to be rapped on the knuckles.

The prime biblical standard, however, is to love. All the words and precepts of Scripture are given us to teach us how to love. Sometimes that does indeed involve saying no, drawing a line. The ten commandments say "You may not –" to teach us how to love.

But we don't just learn from words detached from life. We learn in and by doing. We learn by participating with the body of Christ in the life of the world. All the while reading and rereading Scripture.

We learn new things about the relations between masters and slaves and between men and women. We learn gradually and sometimes painfully slowly.

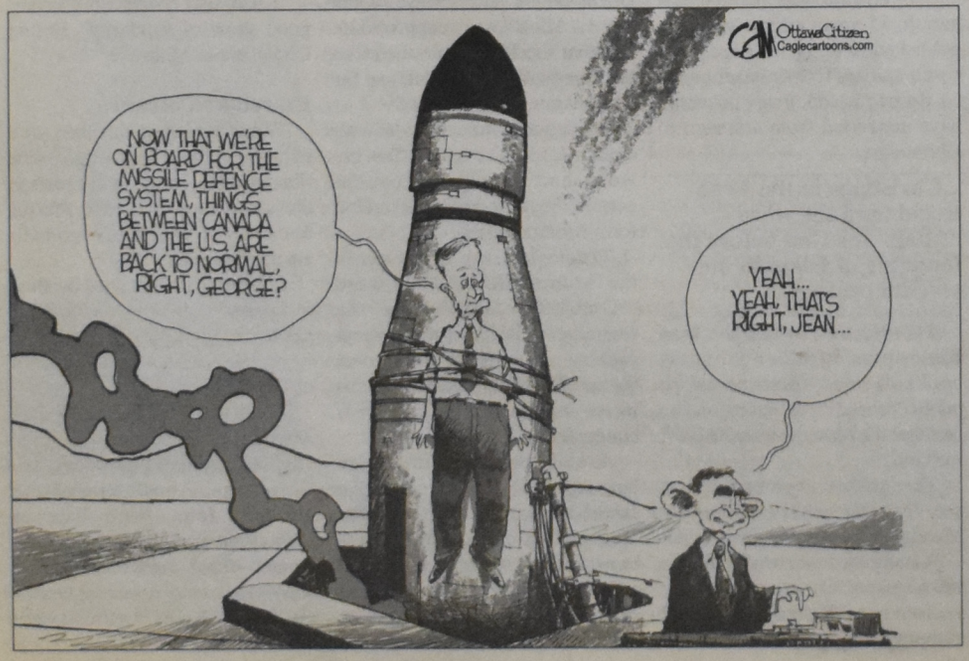
Relaxing our stance on divorce was not, I'm convinced, a swerve away from Scripture but a deeper grasp of its demand to show love – in a changing world.

At one time our faithful forebears knew that Scripture taught obedience to the supreme will of the king or queen. Today we are quite sure it teaches us to participate in giving shape to political authority. That change came about in part through a deepening of our understanding of Scripture – in a changing situation.

However, this doesn't mean I'm right. It just means that sometimes our understanding and application of Scripture changes.

I will abide by the decisions of my church in this matter. But with the action of First Toronto before us, this is the time to raise questions and reflect anew on how we are to be led by God's Word. It may well be that the greatest love the church can show to gays and lesbians is to support them in committing to a life of celibacy.

Harry der Nederlanden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YEAH... YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT, JEAN...

After the Buzzer

Tim Antonides

The Hate Game

As I mentioned about six months ago, I share an office here at school with a guy from England. Paul is a good guy and he loves his sports. I try to talk to him about European "football," but I don't know enough about it to make the conversation interesting. I throw in the odd term like "Man United" and "striker," but for the most part it's quite a pointless conversation.

A few days ago, I invited Paul over to watch Game 2 of the Canucks vs. Minnesota. He said that he'd always been interested in watching hockey – he liked the speed and the rough play. We sat in my living room and enjoyed the game. He did his best to be annoying at times: calling the Minnesota Wild the St. Louis "Blackbirds" and complaining that us North Americans have to draw everything out ("Why not get the whole playoff done in one game instead of seven?"). Other than that, though, we had a great time and he loved the game.

"What's missing is pure hate"

At the end of the game, the Canucks and Wild got into some scraps. There were punches and slashes going around. Some Vancouver fans threw their drink cups at the Wild players. Things were a little out-of-control for a bit. I made some comment to Paul like, "Wow, this is getting a little crazy." "What are you talking about?" he replied. "You should go to a football game in England. When the national team plays another country, we always boo their anthem. We fight in the stands and in the parking lots. We sing dirty songs about the officials. We riot in the neighborhood afterwards. We…" He said these things with a nostalgic gleam of fondness in his eye like he was talking about afternoon tea in front of the fireplace back home.

Paul was exaggerating, of course. But he did mention something further. He said, "What's missing is pure hate. Back home, we really hate the actual team and their fans."

I know what he's talking about. I find myself "hating" certain teams and players. It might be certain teams like Detroit (because, well, they're the Red Wings) or particular players like Chris Chelios, whose attitude on the ice grates me. It's no coincidence that these things/people I hate are also ones that have burned the Canucks so badly in the past. Where does this hate come from? What happens when a guy like Todd Bertuzzi (who many fans hate) plays for your own team? Do you put your hatred on hold? And what's more, should a Christian be hating a team or a player?

Artificial hatred

Whenever I used to say that I hated something (like carrots), my dad would say that you should only hate evil. So then I would say that I hated evil carrots. Maybe the same sort of thing went on in your house. In these sports instances, I don't think we're talking about hate. I think it's about the deep need to identify with something like a sports team and oppose anything that threatens its success. The more involved we are in something, the more we despise those elements that threaten it. Sometimes it's about justice too. It doesn't seem right that certain teams win over and over (like the Red Wings), while other teams struggle just to stay alive (like the Calgary Flames).

I hate that the New York Yankees win so many baseball games because they can afford to buy the best players. Sports events are artificially created situations, so maybe a little bit of artificial hatred isn't such a terrible thing.

Tim Antonides is a teacher and sports coach currently studying in Chicago, Illinois.

Church

Lutherans and Anglicans pitch in together for Winnipeg assembly

By Ferdy Baglo

Vancouver (ENI) – The July 21 to 31 assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in central Canada's prairie country is developing into an ecumenical event that will show how Canadian Lutherans and Anglicans work with each other on a daily basis.

The delegates, representing 63 million Lutherans in 76 countries, will gather in Winnipeg, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) hosting the event. The planners are expecting 442 representatives from 136 member churches and a host of other participants under the theme "For the Healing of the World."

This is only the second time the assembly, which normally meets every six years, has been held in North America -- the last time being across the border in the United States at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1957. The most recent meeting was held in Hong Kong in 1997.

Volnteering

Many Anglican lay people and priests have joined their Lutheran counterparts to volunteer for the variety of tasks related to hosting the 11-day event. ELCIC has almost 194,000 members and the ACC (Anglican Church of Canada) counts about 740,000 members.

Full communion sharing between the ELCIC and the ACC was initiated in 2001 at Waterloo, Ontario. The Waterloo Declaration stated that the churches would maintain separate identities but recognise each other's rites, ministries and sacraments. Both churches have praised the arrangement as being flexible and mutually beneficial.

"When I visit my colleagues in the United States, where the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is in full communion with the Episcopal Church in the United States, they look at us with considerable envy because the relationship that we have is so amicable," ELCIC's national Bishop Raymond Schultz said in an interview.

"It also has a great deal of flexibility compared to the US relationship where everything is kind of nailed down from the beginning and is a much more rigid process. It's working [in Canada] because there is the opportunity to make responses based on situations that arise."

Switching sides

Church leaders note that Canada's sparse rural population has obliged churches in some communities to call a single minister to serve congregations of the two denominations. Winnipeg has a congregation served by an Anglican priest and a Lutheran pastor, and in Regina, Saskatchewan, the city's largest Anglican church has called a Lutheran pastor to serve as rector.

Anglican dioceses and Lutheran synods sponsor joint worship, stewardship and other study events. Leaders from both denominations have participated in the consecration of their bishops. For more than eight years, Canada's six Lutheran and 30 Anglican active bishops have met to discuss mutual concerns and share in worship.

Anglicans in Canada trace their beginnings to the arrival of chaplains accompanying British explorers in the 15th and 16th centuries, and to the activity of Church of England missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries. The General Synod of the former Church of England in Canada (now the ACC) was established in 1893.

Lutherans are recorded as having a presence in Canada around the time of the arrival of German immigrants to Nova Scotia in 1750. But it was not until the 19th century that missionaries from the United States began to establish congregations among immigrant communities across Canada. Lutherans in Canada did not form their own separate national identity until the 1960s, through a series of mergers that resulted in the 1986 establishment of the ELCIC.

Church taken during apartheid handed back

Max du Preez

Paarl, South Africa (ENI) — The former members of St Stephen's Church, in the main street of this town in the Cape's wine-growing area, have returned 22 years after they were forced to leave because they were the wrong color during the era of South Africa's racial ideology of apartheid.

Descendants of the congregation, forced to move from a white zone to a church in a colored or mixed-race area, attended services at St Stephen's, the first since the church's hand-over the previous week during celebrations for South Africa's national day.

"For many of us here the last 20 years were years of exile, but today we came home," said the Rev. Roderick Cox, St Stephens' new priest. "The church in which our fathers and their fathers were baptized, married and buried, is back in our hands."

Taken by the Dutch Reformed Church

The church had been taken over by the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), but on April 27, the original worshipers got their church back at a ceremony attended by both the NGK and the Anglican congregations.

The handing over during the week of celebrations for South Africa's Freedom Day was seen as a symbolic act of rapprochement between the NGK and the Anglican church, which had fought the racist policies of the government at the time.

Present at the ceremony were Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane and Connie Burger, the moderator of the NGK, which had found justification for apartheid in the past, but has since renounced it.

Ndungane, who succeeded Desmond Tutu as leader of South Africa's Anglicans, noted that St Stephen's as well as the adjacent Dutch Reformed Church was packed for the ceremony, and that the youth of both congregations took part in it.

"This is an indication that we have to deepen the relationship between the Anglican and the Dutch Reformed Church. Our challenge is to find specific projects in which to cooperate," said Ndungane.

Burger agreed: "May these two congregations give the witness that South Africa will need very much during the next few years."

St Stephen's was built in 1879 to serve the mixed-race population at Noorde-Paarl. The congregation was forced to leave in 1981 after the area was declared a white area. The Anglican church sold the building to the government, which in turn sold it to the Dutch Reformed Church.

In 1998, members of the St Stephen's former congregation applied to authorities for the return of their land. The NGK did not oppose it, and the building was sold to the Anglican Church for 780,000 South African rands ($75,000). On April 27 the old congregation's first service in the church was one held jointly with the mainly white NGK Noorde-Paarl congregation.

Stung By Outcry, Malaysia Government Reverses Bible Ban

Malaysia – After an outcry from Malaysian Christians and protests from abroad, the government of Malasia, a predominantly Muslim country, reversed its ban on Bibles published in Iban, the language of an indigenous ethnic group.

The edition was banned last month, 15 years after it was first published to serve the needs of a community of former headhunters on Borneo island, many of whom have converted from animism to Christianity

...Christians in the Arab world used the word "Allah" for God before the founding of Islam in the seventh century...

The decision to ban the Iban Bible, plus 34 other religious books deemed "detrimental to public peace," was based on the fact that they use the term "Allah" for God.

The government contention was that this could confuse any Muslim picking up the Iban Bible.

Among the other banned books were several Christian books by well-known Western evangelical authors such as J. I. Packer and John Stott, translated into the Malaysian and Indonesian national languages, and also using the word "Allah" for God.

Allah inappropriate

The Department of Islamic Development had felt use of the word "Allah" was inappropriate and that the Iban Bible therefore breached official guidelines for non-Islamic religious books.

Subsequent consultation with church leaders revealed that the word had been used by the community as a reference to God for a very long time.

Theologians say Christians in the Arab world used the word "Allah" for God before the founding of Islam in the seventh century, and still do today, even though Muslims and Christians have substantially different conceptions of "God."

Asked whether the Iban language had another word that could be used for "God," Dr. Victor Wong of the Bible Society explained that as a formerly animist tribe, the Iban had "all sorts of gods" and care had to be taken not to cause confusion through bad translation.

Wong said there had been an upside to the controversy, as it focused attention on the Iban Christians and an edition of the Bible that many Malaysians had not known existed before now.

It had also resulted in "a very good show of solidarity" among Christians in Malaysia.

Feared and afraid

Wong described the Iban as a tribe renowned in the past for fierceness in battle, but which at the same time was also fearful because of the many gods it acknowledged.

Christianity had helped the Iban to leave behind this fearful existence, Wong said. "Their lives were changed because of the word of God."

About 60 percent of Malaysia's 23 million people are Muslims, and less than 10 percent are Christians. About half of the 400,000 Iban, who live in Malaysia's Sarawak province on Borneo island, are Christians.

Story based on a report by Patrick Goodenough, Pacific Rim Bureau Chief of CNS News.

Church

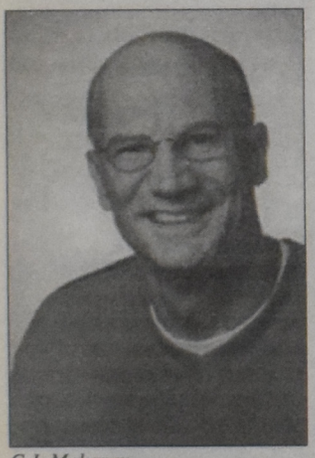
Ministry combines Reformed and charismatic theology

Gary D. Harwood

GAITHERSBURG, Md. (EP) – A geneticist might call Sovereign Grace Ministries a hybrid. The organization describes its theology as "essentially Reformed with a significant charismatic dimension." Formerly known as People of Destiny International, the ministry currently is comprised of 54 churches with new plants in Greenville, South Carolina, and Corning, New York, coming soon. Though the ministry began in 1982, churches now exist in the United States, Bolivia, Mexico, Canada and the United Kingdom, all adhering to the same doctrinal statement. At present there are over 17,000 members worldwide.

I think where people make a mistake is when they say 'all people, under every circumstance, will and should be healed, if they only have enough faith.' I don't think that is biblical."

Many of the leaders of Sovereign Grace became believers under the influence of the charismatic movement in the 1970's. C. J. Mahaney, who heads up the organization, began reading Reformed theology and works of the Puritans after his conversion in 1972. The group sees nothing unusual in adhering to both the "doctrines of grace" and the continuation of the spiritual gifts, viewing them as consistent with Pauline theology.



C.J. Mahaney

CrossWay Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, is a Sovereign Grace plant of 1991, where Mickey Connolly is senior pastor. Connolly sees the empowering of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts as biblical. "We don't see where these things have ended," he said. "They're in the Bible and we want to do what is in the Bible." The senior pastor said the gifts are not adding to the closed biblical canon but are provided for empowering the church's ministry.

The church differentiates from traditional Pentecostal teaching on certain issues. Pentecostals generally teach that speaking in tongues is the necessary proof of having received "the baptism of the Spirit." While CrossWay's pastors adhere to a second distinct experience apart from regeneration, they do not teach that tongues are the necessary proof."

For us, the important point is not the initial experience," said Connolly, but that "people are walking in the power of the Spirit...as God intended us to live the Christian life."

The CrossWay senior pastor added that "our experiences need to be soundly grounded in the Word, and explained by the Word. Peter at Pentecost doesn't talk about his experience there. He gets up and explains biblically what has happened, quoting Joel. He talks about the relationship between the reception of the Spirit [and] the gospel of Christ's work."

Healing not guaranteed

The church also prays for people to be healed, because "in James, the elders are commanded to pray for the people to be healed," said Connolly. He said that healings occur because "we are beginning to experience the benefits of the cross, the benefits of the atonement, and the reign of the kingdom of God."

However, because we live in between the inauguration and the consummation of the kingdom of God, not everyone is healed. "The cross and the atonement don't guarantee healing for all Christians. I think where people make a mistake is when they say 'all people, under every circumstance, will and should be healed, if they only have enough faith.' I don't think that is biblical." Even so, Connolly said we must be open "to the possibility that God would continue to heal divinely and sovereignly in our day," adding that, "even the most flaming cessationist (if they're sick) prays for healing."

The church and her umbrella organization, Sovereign Grace Ministries, also hold to basic Reformed teaching regarding salvation being a sovereign work of God. "It's not what we've done for ourselves, it's what God has done for us," said Connolly. He added that election is a teaching for believers and not part of the Gospel presentation. The church differs from most Reformed churches in that it baptizes adults by immersion.

While believing strongly in their distinctive theology, CrossWay's senior pastor said, "We try not to compare ourselves with others, because there are many other churches and movements that we respect very much. As long as people are preaching the Gospel, then God bless them; because that is the message that saves us."

Sovereign Grace's leadership believes in theological training. A Pastors College, modeled after Charles Spurgeon's pastors college of the 1800s, is provided for those who have been recognized as gifted for ministry by local church leaders.

The ministry's worship leaders also write some of their own music for worship, even putting out several compact discs of their worship music.

Chapter & Verse

Al Wolters

The "Bells" of the Horses Holy

"On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar." (Zech. 14:20, NIV)

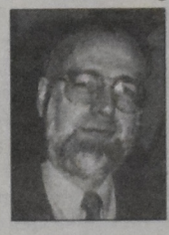
What an amazing thing memory is! For some reason I have a very distinct recollection of hearing a chapel talk on this verse at Calvin College in the early 1960's. It was at Christmas time, probably in 1962 or 1963. The speaker was Dr. William Spoelhof, at that time the president of Calvin College. As I recall it, he used to do a Christmas chapel message every year, and used to pick as his theme some topic or item traditionally associated with Christmas. I think he must have run out of the more obvious Christmas themes (shepherds, perhaps, or the star or manger) on the occasion that I remember, because that year he chose "bells," and related it to this text. Now it's true that you see a lot of bells on Christmas cards, but it struck me then (as it does now) as a bit of a stretch, at least from a biblical point of view, to take bells as a specifically Christmas theme. I hasten to add, however, that Dr. Spoelhof gave an excellent neocalvinist exposition of this verse, stressing the fact that every aspect of our lives, even the most humble and apparently insignificant, should be dedicated to the service of God. In fact, I have noticed in the intervening years that this verse from Zech. 14 is something of a favorite among neocalvinists, who like to use it to make precisely that point, and I personally certainly applaud that use and that emphasis.

Lexicographical Obscurity

Ironically, however, it turns out that this verse may not refer to bells at all. For the last number of years I have been working on a commentary on the book of Zechariah, paying special attention to the history of its interpretation, and I have discovered that the Hebrew word which nowadays is quite consistently translated "bells" is really quite mysterious. The word in question is *metsillot*, and could possibly derive from a Hebrew root meaning "tinkle," but it could also derive from roots meaning either "depth" or "shade." Since the word occurs nowhere else in the Bible, it is anyone's guess what its meaning is here. The ancient versions (the Bible translations into Greek, Latin, Syriac, etc. which were done in antiquity) already disagree among themselves, having such diverse renderings as "depth" and "shady walkway." For some reason, a number of them translate the word as "bit" or "bridle." It wasn't until the middle ages that the meaning "bells" was first suggested, but even that suggestion (by the great Jewish biblical scholar Rashi in the eleventh century) was sufficiently vague to allow for the more general interpretation "tinkling ornaments." "Bells" did not become the standard interpretation until modern times. But it's still just a guess, and I am myself doubtful whether bells as we know them were really part of a horse's accoutrements in ancient Israel. Perhaps "tinkling ornaments" is closer to the mark.

Perspicuity Nonetheless

Of course the difficulty surrounding this one Hebrew word does not really affect the basic point of the passage in which it occurs. It is clear that the text tells us that HOLY TO THE LORD will be written even on some obscure part of a horse's trappings – that even such common items of the stable, as well as the ordinary pots and pans of the kitchen, will be consecrated to the Lord's service. The prophet is here envisioning a glorious future – a future in which we are now privileged to live – when the strict separation of holy and profane items, which was still so strongly insisted upon in the Old Testament, would be done away with, and when all things in human life would lie within the sphere of sanctification. In short, the prophet foresees a time when it will be clearer than ever before that life in its entirety is religion. On that point I agree emphatically with Dr. Spoelhof's Christmas message during my college years.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario. He hopes some day before the eschaton to complete his commentary on the book of Zechariah. If Dr. Spoelhof, who is reputed to be still active and alert, should read this column, this former Calvin student hereby salutes him, and thanks him for his chapel talk of some forty years ago.

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Opinion

The war about the war in Iraq

Harry Antonides

I have been musing about the reason the American-led war against Iraq is so contentious even among family members and friends. What is it about this war that makes so many gingerly tiptoe around this topic for fear that they might alienate someone or, horrors, end up in a shouting match?

Not a few articles have been written about people losing friends or fearing such loss if they let it be known on which side of the Iraqi war they are on. I have been met with incomprehension and surprise when I said that the war against Iraq is justified under existing circumstances.

It is safe to say that those who support this war are not very popular, not even in certain quarters of the Christian community. One of the reasons is that we Christians are called to be peacemakers - not warmongers.

And those who make that claim are right. We are indeed called to be for peace not war, but....

By this time in the conversation you better be prepared for a sharp rejoinder: "But what! There you go again, stating a position and then weaseling out of it. You agree that we are to follow Christ in being agents of reconciliation. How can you then favor the killing of people, because that is what war is about?"

View from the Mansour-Millia Hotel on the Tigris.

A tough row to hoe

This is not an easy question to answer, especially not with a thirty second sound bite that silences the questioner. So let me skip this question for now, and simply admit that it is a difficult one that needs to be answered.

So I begin with conceding an important point to the Christians who are against this war. We all should abhor war and seek peace.

Further, the anti-war position has the advantage, at least at first sight, to be morally superior within the Christian context. It is far easier to state that we are to love our neighbor than to kill him. (I deliberately pose the issue in the starkest and least appealing terms.)

There is no doubt; the anti-war proponents occupy the moral high ground. The pro-war people, on the other hand are defending a position that makes them in some sense co-responsible for the destruction of human life. After all, war is nasty and cruel. There is no way around that ugly reality. People, sometimes innocent people, get killed or mutilated. And who would want to have that on their conscience?

There is a further difficulty faced by those on this side of the war controversy. The public debate about substantial choices, such as life or death, war or peace, freedom or slavery, good or evil, truth or falsehood, now largely occurs within a moral, historical and religious vacuum.

The deepest problem of our culture is that we no longer have a generally shared conviction about an authoritative, abiding standard by which we are able to distinguish between right and wrong. Not that this is entirely lacking. If this were so, all decency, humanity and civility would disappear, and ordinary life would be destroyed. (There are plenty of places where even now that is happening. Think Zimbabwe, and the Congo.)

Nonetheless, we have to face the unpleasant reality that a broadly shared consensus about right and wrong has certainly been severely battered and weakened. And the Christian community has not escaped the effects of that disease. The blame for that lies with the growing popularity of the belief that truth is what we say it is. Not thought (certainly not biblical thought) and reasoning, but feelings and impressions now rule supreme. This is what makes us ripe for the picking by fanatics and nutbars. (Think of Jesus' warning against an empty house that is invaded by seven evil spirits.)

The foregoing is simply the recognition that the pro-war position is the more difficult one – at least on the surface. Therefore, those who take that position had better be prepared to row against the stream and have some very weighty reasons for their position. I have cited some in my previous articles and plan to do so again in subsequent ones. Here I will concentrate on one important element of the war: the role of the media. My bias on this topic is that the media has by and large not helped to resolve but in fact has exacerbated the controversies surrounding the war in Iraq

Is that information, or what?

It is fair to say that the media plays a major role in influencing, if not shaping, public opinion. Especially television, with its graphic images of spectacular events such as military battles, has a powerful effect on audiences. In my view they have all too often not served to enlighten but to create a preconceived impression and thereby add to the confusion surrounding this war.

This in no way detracts from the excellent and difficult frontline reporting done by some reporters often working at the risk of their lives. (Matthew Fisher, the only Canadian journalist "embedded" with the coalition forces, deserves an honorable mention.) But here I am focusing on the presence of a clearly anti-American and anti-war bias so prevalent in the Canadian, European and even in the American mainline media.

Opinion polls show that a large percentage of those employed in the media are of a liberal mindset. Most of them would consider themselves to be "progressive," that is politically on the left, espousing interventionist public policies, and carrying large grudges against the United States. During the Cold War, many of them were beholden to the idea that the United States and the Soviet Union were morally equivalent. According to this view, the Americans were just as guilty, if not more so than the Soviet Union for the East-West conflict with its attendant danger of all-out war.

For example, they tend to regard the Cuban revolution as a form of political liberation, blaming the United States and not Fidel Castro for the misery of economic backwardness and political oppression in that country.

The media treated the run-up to, and the Iraq war itself in a similar way. They generally took a dim view of the United States' attempt to force Saddam Hussein to comply with the numerous UN resolutions adopted since the First Gulf War in 1991. President Bush was depicted as a bloodthirsty warmonger who did not care about the suffering that a war would unleash on the Iraqi people. Some went even so far as to say that President Bush is more of a danger to the world than Saddam Hussein. A recent poll in France found that one-third of the population were hoping that Saddam would defeat the American-led coalition.

There were many who predicted that the war against Iraq would end disastrously in a Vietnam-like quagmire. The U.N.'s warning that the war would result in millions of refugees, 500,000 civilian dead and large scale infrastructure destruction were repeated endlessly, in the secular as well as the religious press.

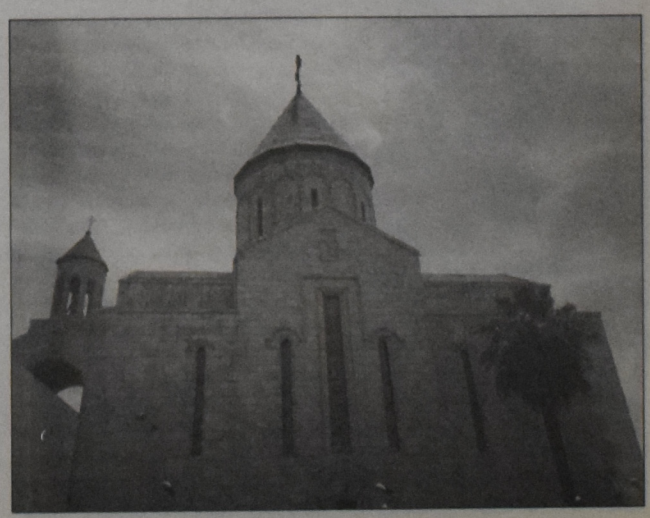
Once the war started on March 19, many of the reporters' questions at the military briefings sounded more like accusations than questions of information. At one session I watched, more than one reporter insinuated that the military were lying. The antagonism of many of the newshounds was thick in the air.

Every setback or slowdown in the race to Baghdad was an occasion to find fault with the leadership of the military and the Bush administration. Often, there were plenty of pictures and reports of civilian casualties and sullen or antagonistic Iraqis while the evidence of Iraqis' joy at their liberation was played down. Or when shown, such incidents were quickly contrasted with bad news for the coalition.

How about a little gratitude?

Before the fall of Baghdad, after barely four weeks of fighting, some reporters concentrated on civilian casualties and on the hostility of the population towards the Americans. When the war was brought to a swift ending, the big story was not this truly amazing success and the low casualty rates but the destruction caused by the bombing and the looting that followed the evaporation of the Saddam regime.

Things have not improved much, as far as many reporters and editorialists are concerned. The military has come under heavy fire for not preventing the looting and destruction and not quickly restoring the supply of water and electricity. More doomsday scenarios are appearing as Shia clerics and



The Catholic Armenian Church, brand new, genuine Armenian style

Opinion

their followers are demonstrating against what they call the American occupation forces and demanding that they leave the country forthwith.

Ironically, these Muslims are able to freely gather at their religious festivals for the first time in decades. They are now free to do so and to express their animosity toward the Americans only because these very same Americans have liberated them from a regime that killed thousands of their fellow believers and members of their own families. Would at least some recognition of that fact and gratitude not be in order?

But perhaps we should not be too surprised about the ingratitude of these Shias. After all, they are enthralled by a religion that rigidly follows the dictates of the Koran as interpreted by a small number of those who are in possession of the truth. This form of religion divides people between us and them.

There is a second reason we should not be too surprised about what strikes some of us as shocking ingratitude. The Arab and Islamic population has been subjected to a message, relentlessly proclaimed in the name of Allah, that closes them off from the real world. Their world is shaped by the fiery denunciations from the pulpits of their mosques where the West, and especially the U.S., are depicted as the world of infidels that must be defeated. Their media reports only what advances that narrow and hate-filled view of the world. No wonder that people who are systematically fed that sort of worldview are not open to reality.

Al-Qurna, one hour North of Basrah: the presumed location of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Knowledge

is as narrow and hate-filled as the poison spouted by the radical imams. Examples are plentiful, but I will restrict myself to quote from an exceptionally virulent attack on the American liberalization of Iraq. Here is a dispatch from Baghdad by Robert Fisk, on his website dated April 17, 2003, under this bold heading:

"America's war of 'liberation' may be over. But Iraq's war of liberation from the Americans is just about to begin."

Then follows this opening salvo:

"It's going wrong, faster than anyone could have imagined. The army of 'liberation' has already turned into the army of occupation. The Shias are threatening to fight the Americans, to create their own war of 'liberation.'"

After lambasting the Americans for imposing a curfew in Baghdad, Fisk continues:

"So now – with neither electricity nor running water – the millions of Iraqi here are ordered to stay in their homes from dusk to dawn. Lockdown. It's a form of imprisonment. In their own country. Written by the command of the 1st Marine Division, it's a curfew in all but name.

'If I was an Iraqi and I read that,' an Iraqi woman shouted at me, 'I would become a suicide bomber.' And all across Baghdad you hear the same thing, from Shia Muslim clerics to Sunni businessmen, that the Americans have come only for oil, and that soon – very soon – a guerilla resistance must start. . . .

"Marine officers in Baghdad were holding talks yesterday with a Shia militant cleric from Najaf to avert an outbreak of fighting around the holy city. I met the prelate before the negotiations began and he told me that 'history is being repeated.' He was talking of the British invasion of Iraq in 1917, which ended in disaster for the British."

And so Fisk continues the litany for five full pages detailing the sins of omission and commission of the American and British military in Iraq. He is sure that this is a totally misguided effort that will only serve to foment more hatred of the Americans and cause more suffering for the Iraqi people. He concludes this long list of gloomy predictions with this shot – laced with a generous dose of schadenfreude.

Babylon: the lion of basalt, brought back from Jordan by King Nebuchadnezzar.

An awful prediction

But what I consider even more astonishing is that right here in our own midst we find a mindset that nurtures a view of the world that

Peddling falsehoods

"It's easy for a reporter to predict doom, especially after a brutal war that lacked all international legitimacy. But catastrophe usually waits for optimists in the Middle East, especially for false optimists who invade oil-rich nations with ideological excuses and high-flown moral claims and accusations, such as weapons of mass destruction, which are still unproved. So I'll make an awful prediction. That America's war of 'liberation' is over. Iraq's war of liberation from the Americans is about to begin. In other words, the real and frightening story starts now."

I wonder if Fisk ever stops to think of the irony that if he had lived under the Saddam regime and would write in the same critical way about that regime, he would be dead or wished he were – such is the horrific reality of the kind of torture its victims were subjected to. The idea that freedom is a priceless gift, sometimes worth fighting for, seems to have escaped him.

This is the reality: Iraqis were tyrannized by a regime dominated by one man who maintained control by fear and terror. It has the blood of hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families on its hands. This is in addition to the threat Iraq posed to its neighbors. Just ask the Kuwaitis.

After 12 years of endless bickering and deception by the Iraqi regime, something unprecedented happened despite all the dire predictions to the contrary. Under the leadership of the United States, at great cost and risk to itself and its few allies, the Saddam regime was destroyed. For the first time in decades Iraq has the opportunity to make a fresh start, to release the skills and energy of its people and to put its immense resources to constructive ends.

What is the response from the likes of Robert Fisk? It's all wrong, they say. The U.S. is a power hungry bully guilty of the worst form of deception and indifferent to the true well being of the Iraqi people. Anyway, they warn, the U.S. may have won the war, but their attempt to establish a free and democratic Iraq is bound to fail – is already failing.

Then they proceed to do their best to make sure that this honest effort of building a free and democratic society will indeed fail. Which it will, if the readers of this kind of falsehood refuse to see this poison for what it really is.

I, for one, am cautiously optimistic, and I pray that by the grace of God somehow good will prevail and Iraqis will grasp the opportunities liberty provides. But it will not be easy, for the obstacles are daunting. No thanks to Robert Fisk and all the other America-hating doomsayers of the media.

pictures courtesy of: http://turing.wins.uva.nl/~grunberg/photos/may_2001/baghdad.html

A voice of dignity and respect amidst the din of war

Below are a few excerpts from a remarkable speech by Lt. Col. Tim Collins, commander First Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, to his soldiers at Fort Blair Mayne in northern Kuwait, as they left for Iraq:

We go to liberate, not to conquer. We will not fly our flags in their country. We are entering Iraq to free a people and the only flag which will be flown in that ancient land is their own. Show respect for them....

Iraq is steeped in history. It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood and the birthplace of Abraham. Tread lightly there. You will see things that no man could pay to see and you will have to go a long way to find a more decent, generous and upright people than the Iraqis. You will be embarrassed by their hospitality even though they have nothing. Don't treat them as refugees, for they are in their own country. Their children will be poor. In years to come they will know that the light of liberation in their lives was brought by you.

If there are casualties of war then remember that when they woke up and got dressed in the morning they did not plan to die this day. Allow them dignity in death. Bury them properly and mark their graves.

It is my foremost intention to bring every single one of you out alive, but there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign. We will put them in their sleeping bags and send them back. There will be no time for sorrow....

It is a big step to take another human life. It is not to be done lightly. I know of men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts. I can assure you they live with the mark of Cain upon them. If someone surrenders to you, then remember they have that right in international law and ensure that one day they go home to their family.

The ones who wish to fight -- well, we aim to please.

If you harm the regiment or its history by over-enthusiasm in killing or in cowardice, know it is your family who will suffer. You will be shunned unless your conduct is of the highest for your deeds will follow you down through history. We will bring shame on neither our uniform or our nation.

Lt. Col. Tim Collins, Royal Irish Regiment

Humor

The misery of the missing key

Harry der Nederlanden

It's Tuesday morning. The sun is struggling to get through the haze and the streets in downtown St. Catharines are still wet with last night's rain.

Yes, that's me sitting on the hood of my car in front of the police station gazing at the two churches across the road. Actually, although the '86 Cavalier I'm sitting on is legally mine, I think of it as belonging to my son, Jonathan. He's in grade 12 and got his driver's license this past year. His oldest sister, Clarissa, used to drive this car, but she lives in Toronto, and we no longer trusted the rusty old Cavalier on the freeways, so she got a newer car.

But why am I sitting here on the hood of this old car admiring the architecture of two old churches that are not very admirable? As long as I'm sitting on my car, I figure that even though the parking meter has expired, the police won't give me a ticket. The only change left in my pocket is pennies and dimes, and the meter doesn't take anything smaller than quarters.

H. DERNEDERLANDEN CARTOON

Why don't I just drive away? The car is locked and I don't have a key to unlock it. No, I didn't lock my keys in the car. When my wife had extra keys made for the Cavalier, she got one extra ignition key. That's the one that ended up on my key ring. She figured I didn't need a door key because I never lock the door anyhow.

But this is downtown St. Catharines right in front of the police station, and I thought that police stations might be a sort of magnet for thieves. My laptop is in the car, and I didn't know how long I'd be in the police station, so I locked the doors. You're right; I wasn't thinking.

You're wondering what I'm doing at the police station early Tuesday morning? Alas, I was caught up in the blindly grinding wheels of justice. Although we own two aging vehicles, we really can't afford to keep them both in top condition. And when a car isn't worth more than a couple of hundred dollars, you hesitate before sinking more money into it. You hesitate and then you hesitate again. You look at the tires and say, "Oh, we can get another month's use out of them. Just stay off the highway." The muffler gets louder and louder, and you say, "It's still no louder than a Harley – except when you really step on it." The lights on the dash don't come on anymore, and you say, "Oh well, you really don't need to see the speedometer to know how fast you're going. Just keep up with traffic."

So on Saturday evening, my son and I hopped in his Cavalier to go to Burger King. To me the Whopper is the Platonic ideal of the hamburger become real, and there's a special this month: instead of $3.69, Whoppers are only $1.99. It was the third time last week that I was indulging my passion for those big burgers. I'd rather have a Whopper than a t-bone steak.

My son was driving, but I was so fixated on my vision of a Whopper with a flame-broiled patty, lettuce, tomatoes, pickles, onions and the special sauce, that I didn't immediately notice the police car turning onto Linwell just as we did. As the Cavalier roared like a 747 at take-off, however, I glanced in the mirror and spotted the police car.

"Better turn right at the next corner," I urged my son. "We're going to have a cop on our tail pretty soon."

But it was a mild day, and the police officer was driving with his window down. My guess is that he heard us coming from two or three blocks away. When we turned off Linwell onto a side street, he followed us. My son was already pulling over when the flashers came on.

After asking for my son's driver's license and the ownership papers, which I couldn't find, the officer asked us where we were headed.

"To Burger King," said Jonathan. I knew we were in trouble.

The officer leaned down to peer into the car. His eyebrows rose. "Isn't that in the other direction?" he asked, not because he didn't know the answer. Police officers are sly that way.

"We saw you coming," I said, giggling like an idiot.

I thought he might give us some credit for getting out of his way.

The officer walked around the car a couple of times. "Who owns this car?"

"I drive it, but my dad owns it," answered Jonathan.

The officer leveled an accusatory stare at me. "He just uses it to drive to school," I whined. I didn't mean it to come out as a whine, but accusatory stares do something to my voice.

"What school do you go to?"

"Beacon Christian High."

The officer nodded thoughtfully. My hopes rose. I could tell he was a philosophical sort, weighing all the political, sociological and psychological factors. After all, he hadn't come right out and accused me of being a criminally negligent father for letting my son drive around in a clunker with bald tires and a muffler with a hole in it the size of my head (by then my head had shrunk down to the size of my fist). He must have taken sensitivity training.

As I opened my mouth, my son gave me a warning glance. A few months ago, I got a ticket on the way to church for not coming to a complete stop at a stop sign. Although it was only a warning ticket, I gave the officer an argument. The entire time, my son was punching me to tell me not to push my luck. But, honest, I had already stopped once, maybe fifteen feet back. The rolling stop was really my second stop for the same stop sign.

The officer squatted down beside the driver's door so he could talk to both of us. "You may want to think about retiring this car," he suggested diplomatically.

It was his way of telling me that he thought the Cavalier was such a piece of junk, it wasn't worth getting new tires and a new muffler for it.

My stomach sunk. Over the last few years, late Friday or Saturday night during the late news, when my body was already shutting down for the night, my temperature dropping and my extremities growing heavy as trees, I'd have to pry myself out of my lazyboy to pick up Jonathan or Pamela from a friend's house. Most of their friends seemed to live out of town. When I got there, anywhere between ten and fifteen teenagers would tumble into our old Dodge Caravan, and for the next hour or so I'd be scanning strange streets in the darkness to drop off teenagers at addresses all over St. Catharines and beyond. Sometimes I'd be headed homeward only to discover that one of them had fallen asleep in a dark corner of the van and we'd passed his house a half hour earlier.

I didn't want to go back to those days. The police officer must have read the horror in my eyes.

"Maybe you can buy a couple of used tires from a wrecker," he suggested, handing me a yellow ticket. "This is an order to appear at the station downtown on Tuesday. If you want to keep running this car, you'll have to show the officer that you've replaced the tires and repaired the muffler."

Now you know why I'm sitting here in front of the police station on the hood of my locked car thinking about the communities that erected these two grand old churches over one hundred years ago (and another five) on this street, appropriately called Church Street. I'm waiting for Ineke to bring me a complete set of keys.

I was lucky. When I arrived downtown, I realized I had only 25 cents in my pocket. But I found a parking meter with 20 minutes left on it, and that's about how long it took to show the officer inside that my Cavalier had two new tires from Walmart, the cheapest I could find, and a new muffler from Midas. (By the way, although I bought a Midas card this winter which promised me a $10 discount on the muffler, they didn't give me the discount. You don't get the discount when the muffler is on sale, and of course there's always a sale.)

I was also lucky that I didn't get a parking ticket. By the time I got back to my car and realized that I was locked out, the meter had expired. I had only 25 cents in my pocket, and I needed that to make the phone call to ask my wife Rose to come and unlock the door for me. I had to run all the way to the library to find a public phone, so I was parked illegally smack dab in front of the police station. Rose was in the middle of mailing out CC, so she asked Ineke to rescue me. That was fifteen minutes ago, and I'm becoming restive.

I look up and see Ineke's son heading toward me on his mountain bike. He's been helping out in the office after Alan quit. But he wasn't scheduled to work today, and why would he be coming by bicycle?

"Hi!" he says, and cycles on by.

Then I see his mother jogging my way down the sidewalk. Mother and son, it seems, both arrived at this spot at the same time purely by coincidence.

Was it purely coincidence, I wonder, that the police car turned down Linwell Street just as we were? Perhaps, like in that t.v. show, some guardian angel sent the officer our way because the left front tire was on the point of exploding, and... and maybe I've been watching too many cheesy t.v. programs.

Or perhaps I was supposed to learn something about keys. "You may think you have the key to something, but then you find out there are two... or three...." Nah, only philosophers and theologians thought there was only one key. And all the ones who claimed to have found it are dead now.

Come to think of it, I never did get my Whopper.

Education

CHURCHES SHOULD GIVE MUCH GREATER FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Harry derNederlanden

With the churches becoming more diversified, with more members who have not been brought up in the Reformed world-and-life view, can the Christian Reformed Church continue to push Christian schools? As the tuition keeps climbing aren't they more and more becoming schools only for the well-to do? Don't they serve to take our children out of society instead of engaging them in evangelism? Shouldn't we focus more on spreading the gospel instead of spending so much on our own in Christian schools?

These and many more questions are addressed in the report that comes from the synodical Committee to Study Christian Day School Education.

One of the items on the menu for CRC Synod 2003 is a T-bone steak – an 80 page report on Christian day-school education. The committee that delivered this report was appointed by Synod 2000 to examine, clarify and reaffirm Church Order Article 71, which charges office-bearers in the CRC to support and encourage Christian education. The report is not just another theological rationale for Christian schools, although it does that admirably. Along with the latter, it includes a survey of pastors and councils and their attitudes and practices with regard to Christian education and some very concrete practical proposals about how the church should help to support Christian schools financially.

In its final form, I'm sure, this report will be required reading for all office-bearers in the CRC. Hopefully, it will provide some focus and direction to our corporate support for Christian education, which has become rather nebulous and indecisive over the last decades.

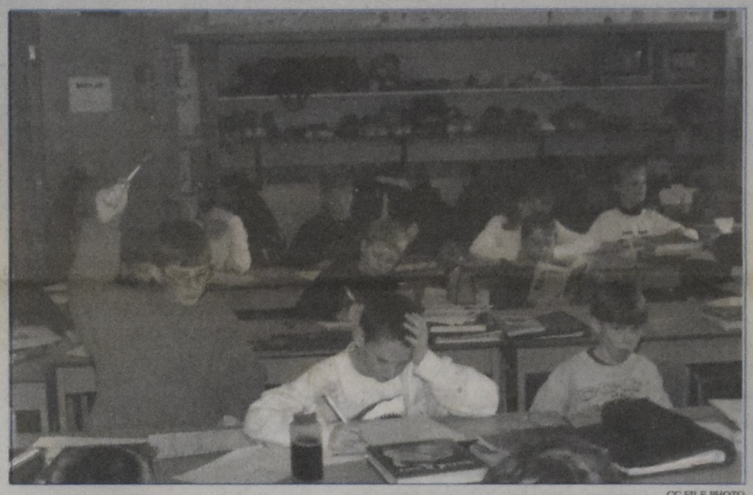
Big changes

The last time Synod addressed the issue was in 1955. Since then both the CRC and society have changed dramatically and one of the tasks of this report is to bring us up to date. There is no move toward soft-peddling the duty of Christian education: "a vision emphasizing the cosmic rule of Christ remains clear in both church and school," affirm the writers. "Christian education for discipleship is an essential part of our Lord's Great Commission to his disciples."

One of the biggest changes in the nurture of children over the last 50 years has been the increased influence of the media. Whereas in 1955 Synod could still speak of a three-legged stool – home, church, school – today, television and the internet have made the media a powerful and pervasive presence in the lives of our children. The values they learn there – secularism, individualism and consumerism – are very much at odds with the traditional "legs" of the stool. Moreover, society as a whole and the public schools have also become more aggressively secular in those decades. These challenges to living a faithful life and the increasing complexity of the modern world make it even more important for the church to nurture "well-rounded and well-trained Reformed Christians who can be a transforming influence in the world."

Consumerism and the availability of other kinds of schools may tempt parents to choose other options than Reformed Christian schools for various reasons, such as to provide a safer environment for their children or higher academic standards. The report urges parents to keep in sight the need for an education that integrates the Christian narrative into all parts of the curriculum. To drift away from the ideals of Reformed Christian education would be "a breach of trust."

A study by Roger Benne (*Quality with Soul*) is cited at some length. Looking at several Christian universities, Benne argued that schools become secularized when they become disconnected from their confess-ional roots and sponsoring church, and when they seek instead to represent a more generic form of Christianity to recruit from a broader pool of students. It is, thus, important that Christian schools keep their Reformed identity and their close links with the church.



CC FILE PHOTO

Schools and mission

One of the best ways for the churches to support Reformed Christian education is for pastors to preach the relevance of the Good News to all areas of life. "Such preaching is critical and requires a strong narrative sense of the Bible's history of redemption, insight into the story of our secular culture, and the prophetic ability to relate the one to the other. Specific sermons about Christian education may be less important than the type of preaching we have been describing – preaching that centers on the lordship of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God."

Pastors and councils, however, hesitate to push Christian schools as boldly as they did fifty years ago because congregations have become more diverse, and a larger segment may not have been nurtured in the Reformed world-and-life view. So they want to respect Christian liberty. But this may be more of an accommodation to the voluntarism and consumerism of North Americans than to Christian liberty. We do those who join our churches a disservice, say the authors, "if we fail clearly and vigorously to proclaim, celebrate, and bear joyful witness to the great and grand vision of Reformed Christianity.... We believe that the CRC and Reformed Christian education need each other and should support each other in their common commitment to Christ's rule over all things, including culture and society." Many, in fact, are attracted to the CRC because of its stress on discipleship in all areas of life and on the importance of Christian education.

One mistake people often make, suggests the report, is to play off the church's responsibility for missions or evangelism against support for Christian education. But there can be no conflict here because the school, too, is part of the church's mission to make and equip disciples. "It is the school, not the church, that prepares Christians for discipleship in politics, science, art, medicine and law." therefore, renewed obedience in one area should not come at the expense of the other. It is not an either/or but a both/and.

A study made of home mission churches planted by the CRC suggests that the existence of a Christian school is a good indicator of whether the new church will be a success.

After reminding us of the theological grounds for our support for Christian day schools in the two biblical themes of covenant and kingdom, the writers propose to add a third ground – mission or evangelism. The covenant commitment made by parents at baptism is that they will nurture their children in the Lord also in terms of their formal education, and the kingdom stresses that Christ is the Lord of all learning. But, argues the report, "Christian education is also an integral part of the evangelistic and discipling ministry of a church that is committed to the Reformed faith."

Fiancing Christian education

'Can we combine these three themes of covenant, kingdom and mission into a unified vision?' ask the authors. They may be brought together in the grand narrative (story) of God's plan of redemption whose purpose is to restore all things in Christ.

The results of a survey attached to the report shows that although support for the idea of Christian education is high among the leadership of the CRC, pastors and councils are reluctant to actively prod parents to send their children to Christian schools. Among churches where Christian education is available, 31 per cent report that none of their children attend a Reformed Christian school and only 23 per cent of CRC students go on to attend a Christian college.

The main reason reported for this drop in attendance is the cost of tuition. Another thing that has changed since 1955, the report tells us, is how we finance Christian education. Whereas it used to be a communal affair, nowadays it is by and large up to the individual parents themselves to come up with the tuition. The nurture of our children, we affirm at baptism, is a common affair, "then financial support should also be a common concern, argue the authors. And they provide the outlines of a model plan with enough flexibility to be used by different kinds of congregations in both Canada and the US.

"As a church develops its plan, it should take the following steps," suggests the report:

1. The congregation should engage in a self-study, accompanied by a study of the biblical requirements of covenant responsibility as well as stewardship. Only if a congregation is clearly committed to sharing the cost of Christian education should a church continue with subsequent steps.

2. On the basis of stewardship discussions and presuming a clear commitment, develop a specific plan and decide at what level the congregation will support Christian day school education (e.g., 100 percent, 80 percent, 50 percent, 25 percent, 10 percent), and place it on the church's general budget. This report and its appendixes can serve as a guide for the church's use. In addition, congregations should seek professional legal and tax accounting advice when drafting their plans.

3. The church issues charitable receipts to all its members based on each person's total contribution (i.e., no separation of the funds for Christian education)."

This is an excellent report with lots of practical guidance; every council in the CRC should put it on their agenda for communal study and discussion.

Christian Living

Why go to church? 21

To get travel directions

A. A. van Ruler

We are coming to the end of our series of answers to the question, Why go to church? The last discussion dealt with that part of the liturgy called the reading of the law. Our title picks up on that subject, for the law directs us in our travels. The law has other, more ceremonial functions as well, but it also points the way for us.

But it isn't only the law that comes into play here; so do many of the other elements that we have discussed earlier, but seen now from a different angle. Every time we assemble the building blocks, new possibilities appear.

We do need directions when we're traveling. When we set out on a hike in unfamiliar terrain, we first need to be trail-wise. Without directions, without trail wisdom, we will quickly lose our way as the various paths branch out and criss-cross one another.

Different paths

We need directions for at least seven different paths that are hard to follow.

The way of *the inward life*, the life of the heart. "Life is a strange journey, and the heart is dark," says M. Nijhof. There are deep abysses in our inner selves. Roads with many turns and twists. Shadowy hiding places. The heart is a maze in which we can easily get lost, never to emerge. It is full of traps, repressed feelings and unconscious desires.

Our worship services shine a light into this darkness in many different ways, a light that pierces to the very bottom and that penetrates into the remotest corners. We might say that the worship service gives us a map of these subterranean mazes. Psychoanalysts cannot penetrate as deeply into the depth of the human self as the gospel and the preaching of the gospel.

Secondly, there is also *life in the outside world*, where we have to make our way on our own. We stand amidst our fellow human beings. We have our work in society. We are citizens of a nation. And through the media all the violence of the nations floods over us.

How do we make our way through it all? How do we make any sense of it? How now shall we find our way? What deeds must we erect against this flood? What judgments must we pass on it?

The Bible is an incredibly concrete book. It is also about these moral, social and political realities. In fact, that is why we were given this special revelation – to give us direction. Moses gave us the law. The prophets watched over the commonwealth. And Jesus took the throne of David.

Thirdly, there is *the life of the sinner*. To live in sin is a confusing business. Just as the liar must tell another lie to cover the first one and the embezzler commits another fraud to conceal the first, so the sinner piles sin upon sin.

Not only that, but there is something overwhelming about sin. The sinner lives in a dream world. He isn't all there, doesn't see himself clearly and soberly. He is no longer entirely real. He cannot get a handle on himself. He doesn't even realize that he is a sinner.

How do we help a drunken man find the way home? We must do more than just point the way. We have to take him by the arm and lead him home. When someone is drunk, he cannot comprehend his own state and his judgment is impaired.

Fourth, there is *the road from our wrong way to the way of salvation*. This is not only a steep road but also a terribly rough road. It is a road full of holes and chasms; it is cut by streams and rivers, so that you must make huge leaps. Some of these leaps are like those made by ski-jumpers: as you hurtle through the air, you don't know whether you will make a safe landing.

The church is there to coach us through this leap. That's the reason she exists. The church gives us wisdom on how to navigate this frightening passage from the way of sin to the way of life.

Then there is, in the fifth place, *living the life of salvation*. This isn't so simple either. It is almost as complex and confusing as the life of sin. But for very different reasons: salvation is so wide and so deep, we cannot fathom it. It's too good to be true – that we can live a life as redeemed people; that we can be children of God; that we can be eternally safe and secure; that we can be rescued from all forms of corruption!

Yet, this is the gospel; this is salvation. It isn't just about learning to live with it, but we live in it. We live salvation. In our time on earth we are living eternal life. It all seems so fantastic that it's no wonder we need to keep reaching for the trail guide that keeps us on the right path through this mountainous terrain.

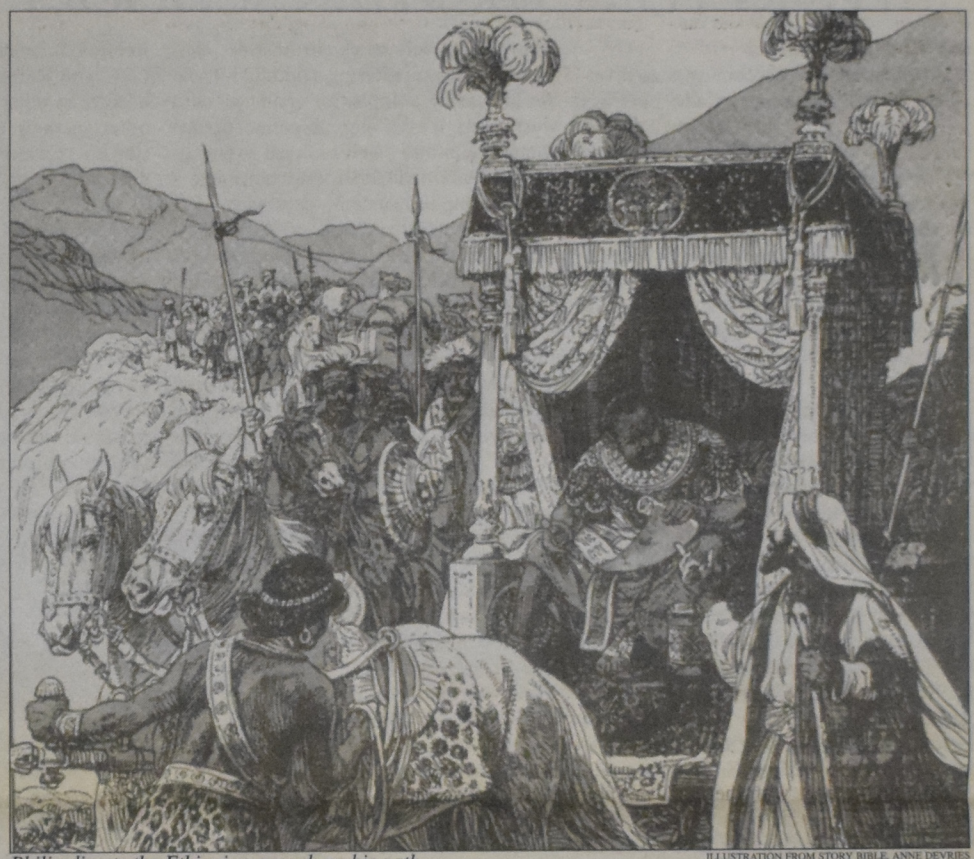


ILLUSTRATION FROM STORY BIBLE, ANNE DEVRIES

Philip directs the Ethiopian eunuch on his path

Sixth, *all of life must issue from salvation*. Salvation must become a living reality in the whole of human life. Life in all its concreteness and all its ins and outs must become colored and stamped by salvation.

We call this sanctification, making holy. Theologians have their hands full trying to think through the meanings of this term, but that is child's play compared to what actually happens as life is sanctified. It is not only a painful process but also a very difficult process. Every moment puts us before the question, how do I in this relationship and in this situation give pure expression to the salvation I've been given?

In the seventh place, there is *the life of the world itself* – not just my life in the world or our efforts to christianize the world – but the world itself. We are spectators as well as participants, and we'd like to know what's happening with this world. What makes it tick? Where is it all headed? What is the content, meaning, purpose and destination of the historical process?

When we attend a symphony concert we like to have a program to know what the orchestra is playing. That is one of the things we are looking for when we go to church: an overview of our history, a program guide to the divine comedy.

Taken by the hand

Let's begin at the heart of the matter. How do we find the way to salvation? To answer this question correctly, we need the church. For the first answer to our question is that we learn the way to salvation because it is proclaimed to us. It is made present and put before us in the preaching of the gospel. We don't come to it, but it comes to us along the long road from the apostolic witness across the ages and across different cultures.

It is proclaimed to us as a command to believe. This is an incredibly important link in the chain. The question is not: 'May I make this my own?' Or, 'Dare I accept it?' Or: 'Can I appropriate it in my own power?' We must do so! We are commanded to believe, to make it our own, whether we want to or not.

This is the rule of the original covenant: we must gratefully accept all the gifts that God gives us and praise him for them – also the gifts of the covenant of grace. The Holy Spirit works this faith, repentance and rebirth in our hearts by way of command, admonition and encouragement. But we see only two parts of the work of the holy Spirit: the command to believe and the personal act of believing – to our own wonder and amazement!

The way to salvation consists of three moments. Two of them we've already dealt with – the testimony that it is there for us, a testimony that makes it present, and the command to believe, a command that eventually creates faith in us. The third is the promise that whoever accepts this salvation in faith receives it. God assures us of that.

In this way, we are taken by the hand and led to it, calmly, step by step. We are not just hurled into the crucible of salvation. Nor is it dumped over our heads. We are gradually led there through the preaching of the Word by someone appointed to that office. It also happens through our regular participation in the liturgy with others.

In April and May the grass doesn't need terrific downpours to begin growing but just a soft and gentle rain. Then things really begin to grow.

We are made trail-wise, however, not just in terms of being led toward salvation but also in being led about in the ways of salvation itself. It's like visiting an ancient palace full of endless corridors, passageways, doorways leading here and there, numerous rooms

and halls. To appreciate the palace we need a guide who leads us from one wonder to another.

Salvation is such a wondrous palace. There's no end to what we can see and discover. We can walk on and on from one room to another. Again and again a new door is opened and new corridors lead to new rooms. Our explorations fill the entire church year, and a minister can go on preaching about it for 50 or 60 years without repeating himself.

At the same time, we may also turn our attention from the inexhaustible and incomprehensible greatness of salvation to the person, to ourselves. To what extent are we living by and in this salvation? To what extent are we part of it in our hearts? In this way our temperature is taken; in fact, we continually take our own temperature. But this isn't an easy thing to do. Before we can really participate in salvation, something else must happen. Or perhaps it happens at the same time.

How do we deal with the fact that we are sinners? To what extent are we aware of our sinful being? The preaching of the Word and the liturgy also plumb our hearts to search out these questions. But we do not easily plumb our hearts to the very bottom; in fact, we will probably never do so. Only Christ our Mediator can plumb the depths of our being. But we must have some knowledge of those depths. Here too we need to be made trail-wise.

In any case, we are told that we are sinners. This is the hard core of the matter. Our sinfulness is no less an article of faith than grace. I must begin to believe that I really am a sinner, and that this is the root of all my misery just as much as I must believe that I am a child of God. The one is no less strange than the other.

Hallmarks of faith

We learn all this not just by the preaching of the Word and faith but also through the liturgy. Communally and formally we confess that we are sinners. The liturgy gives us continual awareness-training in our sinfulness.

But is it genuine? Is it also personal and inward? Do we genuinely realize, experience and feel ourselves to be both sinners and children of God? And do we truly live accordingly in our day to day activities? All of us will have to confess that we will never attain complete authenticity. In and of ourselves we can never wholly bring our existential depths into the light of day.

Nevertheless, the Word of God does give us some hallmarks by which the penitent sinner and the joyful child of God can recognize themselves. The preaching of the Word and the liturgy hold these up like a mirror by which we can recognize who we are.

Over the centuries, these hallmarks of the Christian life have become a confounding maze that sends us running around in circles. But there's no avoiding this. They can also serve as road signs that orient us in the chaotic landscape between sin and salvation. There is, for example, the syllogismus mysticus, the mystical argument, which begins with my own inner experience. If I experience abasement, deep humility, inexpressible joy, I may conclude that I have a part in salvation. There is also the syllogismus practicus, the practical argument, which takes its starting point from what I actually do in my life. If I see good works popping up there, I know that the work of sanctification is happening in me. From these, I may conclude that I am elect and saved.

Taking responsibility

Do such hallmarks help me get there? Certainly not by themselves. I need to be directed on this path from sin to salvation; in fact, I need to ask directions. And if my questions are answered, this brings with them the huge weight of authority.

If I set out to hike through wild country that is wholly unfamiliar to me, and I ask directions from a stranger, I accept his authority. The same is true for our journey through the landscape of sin and salvation. Without instruction from that stranger from Palestine (through the apostolic witness) we may walk on, but we will head in the wrong direction. We need to be made trail-wise; we need to be told.

Not that we are wholly dependent on preachers. We have been given an atlas – the Word of God – from which we can learn a great deal ourselves. And in the final analysis, it is we ourselves who are the unknown country in which we are traveling. This transfers some of the responsibility from the office bearer to the congregation. And it must be transferred once again – from the congregation to the individual. Besides the preaching, there is conversation, and besides conversation there is meditation. All these things relating to sin and salvation have to be applied and digested by me personally. Everything relating to the gospel and myself must be integrated into my own experience and orientation in life.

But behind all this and as the source and current carrying it all forward is the exposition and application of the Word of God by God's ministers. This is why I go to church. Every Sunday again I need to have the way pointed out to me. I need to be told that I am a sinner and that I am (or can be) a child of God. This must come to me with apostolic authority; otherwise, it is just so much nonsense.

I don't only go to church, but the church also comes to me – in the form of the office-bearer. He isn't only preacher and leader of the liturgy; he is also a pastor. He comes to visit me, to talk things over. Pastoral conversation can involve almost anything, but the basic questions concern sin and salvation. Ultimately the conversation must touch on my inner state in the face of eternity.

The leap

Authority is indispensable. We continue to depend on it in the ultimate questions of life. But the strange thing is that, nevertheless, at some point I must make the decision myself and risk the leap. It's like getting on an escalator: it will take me a long ways, but at the last moment I must take the step from the escalator to the floor where I am going.

The preaching of the gospel is the escalator. It carries us up to the level of salvation. But when we reach the top, the level of election and eternal salvation, then we have to take a leap. Perhaps with a bit of a scream. The preaching of the Word doesn't automatically save us.

When I take that final leap, I also take into account my experience and my good works, but this doesn't enable me to come to a conclusion. It always involves a leap, a choice, an act of will. I must leap into the eternal counsel of God; otherwise, I will never make it.

Life as such

Some of the same things are true when we are no longer talking about the way of salvation but simply the way of life. They don't wholly coincide, and they aren't exactly parallel, so what is true of one is not necessarily true of the other. The way of life, for example, requires a bigger dose of "conscience" and a smaller dose of "authority" than the way of salvation. And the apostolic office plays a smaller role in how I carry on my life than the question, 'How do I obtain salvation?'

Both poles, however, are always there. You can never completely do away with Christ, the gospel and the offices of the church. The experience of going to church sticks with you. It is not easy to forget.

Besides what was church all about? About sin and salvation, yes, but also about life as such. The whole of life is laid bare and open there. This is part of the exposition and application of Scripture. To quote Comrie: The exposition is setting the letters; the application is printing them. And the letters of the gospel are pressed onto the soul, but also onto the whole of life.

The apostolic office [the authoritative witness to Christ] always continues to speak or whisper to me through all the decisions my conscience makes. In principle, the offices of the church have something to say about all of life.

Calvin conferring with the Geneva Council

RELIGIOUS NEWS PHOTO SERVICE

At the same time, I must not forget that although awareness of sin and having salvation are crucial things, our service of God in the world (his kingdom) is considerably bigger and more important.

Good works

The practical syllogism, namely, that good works are a confirmation of my eternal salvation, is but one meaning of good works. There are other sides. The important thing is that they should be good. All my works. There are no special "good works" that somehow crown the ordinary doings of life. The whole of my life in all its doings, in all its ordinary preoccupations must be good, virtuous, worthwhile.

Our good works are not just a source of assurance; they are the path ordained by God to eternal life. They also serve the good of my neighbor. They must be diaconal; they must help him in and through his troubles. They must be apostolic; they must draw him to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But God, too, benefits from my good works. He takes joy in them. He is glorified by them. They increase his glory. In this sense, good works do earn merit. They are not a basis for my justification and eternal salvation, but they are a staging place in reality for the glory of God. Essentially they are also already our eternal salvation, for salvation is the same thing as holiness, just as holiness is the same thing as beauty.

We also need to be made trail-wise in the way of life, that is, in the matter of good works. The basic structures of the beautiful life are played out in the liturgy. The reading of the law directs the whole drama toward the practice of our daily lives. In the preaching of the Word (and our discussions of it) everything is put into words, into judgments that speak to our current situation.

To which school shall I send my children? Should I join this union? How will I conduct my sexual life? How can I help to improve my society? There are thousands of issues that pose themselves to us. And we must find our way through them. But we have not been left without direction. In all these things, going to church will help us to become trail-wise.

Politics on the pulpit

Here we enter an entirely new territory. It is not just about what I

..*SeeWhyChurch page 16*

Family/Church

Rewards outweigh the challenges

Lisa M. Petsche

Recently I met up with an old friend, and we soon found ourselves comparing notes about our busy family lives and empathizing about the challenges of parenthood.

Beneath the surface of our conversation, though, was an implicit understanding that parenting is an incredible experience, one we wouldn't trade for anything.

This is not something parents tend to articulate very often or in any great detail. We're much better at describing the trials and tribulations of our vocation: the sleep deprivation in the early years, childhood illnesses and accidents, discipline problems, scheduling issues, endless chauffeuring, struggles to balance work and family, teenager troubles, the financial cost of raising kids, and the uncertainty and anxiety along the way.

But then, it's hard to accurately portray parenthood, given the complexities and contradictions of our role. It's exhausting but exhilarating, frightening yet fulfilling.

Raising children truly is an awesome responsibility, one that would overwhelm us if we didn't take it one phase—sometimes just one day—at a time. By far it's the most challenging endeavor I've ever been involved in, but also the most meaningful.

Morally, parenthood keeps me on my toes, regularly reflecting on my values and priorities as I strive to be a role model of what it means to be a good person and a faithful Christian. I've also discovered depths of energy, patience and selflessness I didn't know I had. At the same time, I've learned a lot about my weaknesses and limitations, which has been humbling.

Having children has greatly expanded my world and led to a special interest in my community and in social and political issues such as education, family poverty, child protection and environmental sustainability. And now that my kids are in school, I'm continually brushing up on my knowledge in a wide variety of subject areas, and sometimes learning new things, as I help them with homework and special projects and accompany them to museums, science centers and the like.

On the lighter side, parenthood allows for a second childhood of sorts. Once again I'm riding on swings, skipping, playing hide and seek, collecting rocks, watching parades and going to amusement parks and all sorts of other neat places. Not only is it great fun, but it also brings back pleasant memories, some long-forgotten, from my own childhood.

My kids remind me how to appreciate simple pleasures and live in the moment, and their fondness for silliness is contagious, keeping me from taking life too seriously. My favorite juvenile forms of humor therapy currently include watching Spongebob Squarepants cartoons and singing along with gusto to "Silly Songs with Larry," a CD featuring animated vegetables belting out such memorable tunes as "The Yodeling Veterinarian of the Alps" and "Love My Lips" ("On the day I got my tooth, I had to kiss my Great Aunt Ruth. She had a beard, and it felt weird").

Countless little things make parenthood rewarding, like witnessing my children master new skills and learning about good deeds they've done or wise decisions they've made independently. And nothing compares to the pleasure of receiving a spontaneous hug, cuddling together as we read aloud a story or watching the kids sleeping securely, peacefully at day's end.

Then there are the heart-warming cards and notes, which allow me to see myself through my children's admiring eyes. I save these in a special box, which I delve into periodically when I need a lift. My nine-year-old daughter is currently the most prolific, penciling messages on scraps of paper that she leaves on my pillow or in my purse. Here's one of my favorites, written last year:

"Dear Mom, Thank you for being there when I get hurt. You make me feel better when you bandage me up. You say no when you think I will get hurt. I appreciate that. Whenever I get the wrong ice cream cone you trade with me. When I make a mistake you say it will be OK. You always help me pick out which shirt to wear. You always make a good decision, Mom. When I'm sick you always know what I like to drink. Happy Mother's Day"

Parenthood doesn't get any better than this.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and freelance writer.

Why church?

...continued from page 15

must do, but also about what we must do together, about what happens in the world. Alongside the micro-questions (my existence as an actor), there are also the macro-questions (world events). We must also be involved on this level.

This territory is full of missteps and pitfalls. Does politics have a place on the pulpit, in the liturgy, in pastoral work? But isn't an apolitical church a salt without savor? Isn't politics the holiest activity there is on earth?

On the other hand, doesn't politics on the pulpit easily lead to spiritual bullying as the preacher imposes his personal opinions on the congregation with the authority of the Word of God?

Parliamentary democracy with its multi-party system has made this a very difficult matter. May the preacher misuse the church for his own political party? It is my impression that nowadays such abuse usually serves the left rather than the right.

The church must accept the fact that over the last century or so the political party has taken over a large part of her work. It is here that we as mature, empowered persons seek to bring to expression the truth about a large part of reality. Here we are involved in the church's prophetic task. Through the work of the political party we seek to order human affairs according to that truth (and the good). In this way, we are busy sanctifying life, just like bishops and elders used to do in the past.

The church must not only acknowledge this development but she must applaud it. Does this, however, mean that she must withdraw completely from the political arena and thus erase herself in this respect? Can she leave it all to the competence of the mature person? Or does she inevitably slash the attractive (but treacherous) face of democracy with the blade of the kingdom? By the strange disfiguration of grace, Christ, after all, of encompasses the true, the good and the beautiful. Scriptures are a Word from God, aren't they and isn't the church charged with preaching that Word? Doesn't Christ rule the church through the apostolic offices and thereby also the world?

So there remains a huge task for the church. She is often not up to the task. She must declare the whole counsel of God to the nations. During the Second World War many of us experienced things we will never forget. In those terrible times, the church pointed the way, also in the political arena. It also made us trail-wise politically. Many of us went to church primarily for that reason – for direction in a time of violence.

Alas, nowadays too many minsters are caught up in the narrow vision of party politics (which often reduces genuine prophecy to left-wing sloganizing) so that they are no longer capable of performing the prophetic office of the church. They have lost their perspective on the world, the perspective of the kingdom. They see the world in a worldly manner not as God's world, often speaking as prophets of darkness.

If the church office bearers discharged their calling fully, then the congregation would get a unique position. To whom is the kingdom prophecy of the church addressed? To the churchgoer or church member? Or to the nation and the nations, to the demonic powers, to the authorities as the servants of the only true God? The congregation must play the role of soundboard in the violin, which is there only to amplify the sound made by the strings.

This is a wholly new motivation for going to church. This is the first time we have come on this theme in our reflections. It is a wonderful thought: I go to church not to get something, not to do or give something, but simply to be something, namely, a soundboard to amplify the Word of God to the governing authorities and the powers, to peoples, nations, and to the birds and trees.

In reality, nothing much comes of this calling. That's our own fault. We churchgoers often have little or no idea what is happening. The office bearers also share some responsibility: they often shut themselves up in the church or spend themselves in the world. But it is also because of the world: it has hardened itself against the lordship of Christ and thrown off the good bonds of the kingdom of God.

Sleep-walkers

To see that this is a bad situation and to experience it as such in one's flesh and bones is already to come a long way. Most people do not see it. Perhaps this is the greatest failure of the church.

We have not done a great deal with all the directions, all the ways we have been made trail-wise. So we are tempted to fall back on the thought that even if nothing much comes of making people familiar with all these paths and making them trail-wise, we can still go to church to keep our own footing (and to avoid falling into the abyss of despair). And we can still continue to travel these paths, which, after all, are really still there.

But this is to become sleep-walkers. Although we don't know the way, at least, not cognitively, we just go on walking. This is strange, but it is also our daily experience. The world and human life are dark and chaotic to us. Yet, they go on; they don't collapse. Everything goes on in its normal or its tumultuous course. And we are all sleep-walking, especially we who live in western Christendom. This is a horrifying spectacle to see played out: the Christian West sleep-walking through the gutters of the world. When will it collapse into the abyss of some ideological dictatorship of one kind or another? May the Holy Spirit save us from such a prospect. May he awaken us and open our eyes.

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Divine Cravings: Women at Synod

Building Trust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

Vicky Van Andel

Synod 2003 of the Christian Reformed Church plans to meet this year at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. This is a change from the usual gathering place at Calvin College in Michigan. When Synod opens on June 13, 2003, there will be two hundred or so delegates and advisers gathered together.

Among the group of people attending Synod will be seven women advisers. Synod 2000 decided that every year seven women should be invited to Synod to have the opportunity to participate in the discussions. At that time it was decided to grant the local classes the freedom to decide whether or not to allow women in ordained offices. This served as a partial solution to the recurring debate on the ordination of women. It was felt that the church as a denomination was not yet ready to take that step. It was also decided to close the discussion on the role of women in the church until Synod 2005. In the meantime, as a bridging measure, seven women would be appointed each year to serve as advisers.

The women who are appointed this year are Kathleen Boldenow, Thea Leunk, Diane Plug, Bonnie Smith, Jean Weening, Karen Wynbeek, and myself. It is the second time I will attend Synod as a woman adviser. I attended two years ago as well. Each year the group is made up of several new women and several women from the year before.

"The single greatest unused resource in the church is the wisdom of women."

I know that to be an effective woman adviser I need to be informed on the issues that are before Synod. For that reason I have been studying the Agenda for Synod 2003, a beautiful book with a shiny wine red cover which is a pleasure to hold (I wonder if anyone else has noticed that). At first glance it appears that Synod 2003 will be interesting. Issues for discussion include: the place of the denominational chaplaincy within the organizational structure of the church, how the rising cost of Christian education could be shared by the Christian community in order to reduce the burden of individual families, a report on the Reformed perspective on new methods in reproductive technology, and the recommendation that the denominational magazine *The Banner* become membership based rather than subscription based.

What stands out for me as I read the Agenda for Synod 2003 is a deep concern for the future of the Christian Reformed Church and a sincere desire to find effective approaches to ensure that the Reformed tradition is passed on to future generations. I get this sense from the report on the future of the denominational magazine *The Banner,* and the concern over the rising cost of Christian education resulting in many families not being able to afford it. What do we need to do to ensure that our rich faith heritage is passed on to the widest possible circle of children and grandchildren?

I share that concern and am therefore glad to be able to attend this year's Synod. Even though I will not have a vote, I will have the opportunity to listen and to speak. In the next few weeks I plan to formulate my thoughts by reading and talking to people. I am also very interested in the report on reproductive technology. It is a well written report and explains the moral implications of the scientific advances in new reproductive technologies, and how to look at them from a Reformed Christian perspective. Scientific accomplishments always seem to be ahead of their ethical and moral implications. In the case of the new reproductive technologies that is no exception. An interesting review of this report to Synod is offered by Harry Cook in a recent issue of *The Banner.*

Given the fact that I was at Synod once before, I feel a little more at ease about my role there. Synod tends to be a bit overwhelming the first time around. In simple terms this is how it works. Synod starts out as a general assembly and then quite early on breaks into committees. Each delegate and adviser sits on a committee. The committees meet mornings, afternoons and evenings for the first several days. They discuss the reports and overtures assigned to them and come up with recommendations. The recommendations are then presented to the full assembly for discussion and voting. That fills up the rest of the week. Socializing is mostly done over coffee and meals. Sunday offers a bit of free time and an opportunity for communal worship.

In spite of the long days of work, it will be a treat to be there and to listen to the latest developments in the church. It is also a treat to be served meals three times a day rather than having to prepare them, not to mention the coffee and the cookies.... I also look forward to seeing some of my old friends again. And I will get a nice break from my work. So, I have lots to look forward to.

I hope that it will not be long before the church opens all offices to all women. Then we will no longer need women advisers. Women and men will both be delegates to Synod and both will have a vote. I believe that a church attended by men and women needs to be managed by men and women.

I am reminded of a daring headline in the religion section of the *Edmonton Journal* newspaper not so long ago which stated: No healing seen for a church run by men. It quoted Mary Malone, a retired University of Toronto professor, as she discussed her books about the history of women in the church, the first two of a trilogy she is in the process of writing, entitled: *Women and Christianity*. Malone talks about the women who have been erased from the Catholic history. "The only women we have heard about are queens or nuns who broke the rules and went public. Stories of good women who were quiet and obedient simply disappear from the pages of church history." She also boldly states: "The single greatest unused resource in the church is the wisdom of women."

Another woman I deeply admire, and someday hope to meet in person is Sister Joan Chittister, a member of the Benedictine sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania. She expresses her fervor for the cause of women in leadership roles in the church in these words: "There are some divine cravings that are worth striving for, finished or unfinished, for as long as it takes to achieve them."

So, I crave prayerfully. May God bless everyone who attends Synod 2003. May God give the people in positions of leadership wisdom and strength. May God give us as women advisers the ability to listen well, and to say the right thing at the right time in the right way.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to cntact her via fax at 1-780-473-0970, or e-mail at : vicky@telus.net

News overview: Fish, the growth of Islam in Europe, and some shocking news

Harry der Nederlanden

Let's start with some good news. India and Pakistan have restored relations and are talking once again instead of sniping. They've been squabbling over Kashmir for decades now. The West only became concerned however after the two countries acquired nuclear capability, and both have threatened to use them. Like Korea. And like the U.S.

One of the first points of discussion on the table between the two countries was the resumption of cricket matches. War by other means.

Pakistan also released a number of India fisherman imprisoned for fishing in Pakistan waters.

Fish and fire

Canadian fishermen, however, suffered another blow as the federal government closed three fisheries on the east coast after declaring the once bountiful Atlantic cod an endangered species. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada said that the cod stocks off Newfoundland had been depleted to the point of endangerment. Cod stocks have dropped 97 per cent since the 1970s and have "essentially disappeared" from some areas of the traditional fishing grounds. After their crab quotas were cut, angry fisherman in New Brunswick demonstrated their despair by setting fisheries and boats on fire. That makes about as much sense as me smashing my computer because I want more subscribers.

Road map toward peace

Journalists and commentators seldom use the word "hope" in the same sentence with Israel and Palestine except to say there isn't any. Early May, however, with the publication of a Mideast peace plan backed not only by the US but also by Russia, Europe, and the UN, the word appeared in a number of headlines. The new Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, is one reason for the new hope. He has denounced terrorism in stronger terms than Arafat ever did. However, sceptics point out that as a result, Abbas is seen as an Uncle Tom by many Palestinians.

The new "road map toward peace" contains little that is new, just added pressure to talk once again about what has long been on the table. It suggests several phases of implementation and calls for creating a Palestinian state by the end of 2003, assuming that both sides meet certain conditions, such as (for Israel) freezing settlement activity and (for Palestinians) ending terrorist attacks against Israel. In the first phase of the plan, the Palestinian Authority is supposed to make "visible efforts" to stop attacks on Israelis, while Israel "immediately dismantles" Jewish settlement outposts built since March 2001 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian militants greeted the plan with another suicide bombing and Israeli soldiers killed several Palestinians.

"Ending the occupation and the settlements in their various forms on all the territory occupied in 1967, including our eternal capital Jerusalem, is the number one national task," said Abbas. He and Arafat both insist that the road map is not a vague formula for negotiations. It is, he said, "a plan to be implemented under tight and active [international] control." Israel, on the other hand, is already trying to postpone the first stage to give them time to further negotiate on some stipulations of the road map.

Radical Islam in Europe

The French are anxious about the large numbers of

...continued on page 18

News/Opinion

Liberation then and liberation now

By John Bolt

I was born after World War II but do 'remember' the liberation of the Netherlands. I remember it so well that when I happened to be in Canada during the week CBC and CTV covered Dutch celebration of its 50th anniversary, it was a personal event.

I identified with the images of celebration, I shared the emotions of emancipation, the joy of new liberty and I was also proud to be a Canadian, proud of the bravery, dedication and professional efficiency of the Canadian army who had liberated us. As someone born in the Netherlands, this was my story — I could identify with the liberated and the liberators.

How can one have such powerful memories of events before one was even born? Stories, stories, stories, stories. I grew up with war stories, stories about Canadian soldiers (and Dutch girls), chocolate bars, and cigarettes. I also went to a Canadian public high school where Canadian military accomplishments were celebrated in history courses. I memorized "Flanders Fields" as a school boy, wore poppies and participated in Remembrance Day events at the town Cenotaph in Ladner, B.C.'s Memorial Park.

I was Dutch; I was Canadian — this was my story. I am still and will always be Dutch — I cannot change the accident of my birth. I voluntarily and gladly became a Canadian citizen as a young adult.

As I write this I still long for a Vancouver-Ottawa Stanley Cup final. However, having lived most of my adult life in the United States, I am now also quite American in spirit. It is this tri-national biography that is background for understanding my support for the Iraqi war of liberation and my joy with its outcome.

War is always ugly, awful and bloody. So is surgery. But the Coalition victory and defeat of the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein was also a thing of beauty in its efficiency and remarkably moral in its execution.

The very thing America-haters despise — the incredible technological sophistication and overwhelming superior might of the American military — may have changed the very future of warfare itself. In President Bush's words from the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, "With new tactics and precision weapons, we can achieve military objectives without direct violence against civilians. No device of men can remove the tragedy from war; yet it is a great moral advance when the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent." Let tyrants beware! (Calvin)

That's why the response of the Iraqi people to their liberators is so important. The images and stories of interactions between American and British soldiers and the children, the young women, the shopkeepers, in Basra and Baghdad are every bit as important for posterity as the stories of the Dutch encounters with the Canadian army in the summer of 1945. But are we getting these stories fully and will they be told to coming generations?

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Not according to embedded reporter Jonathan Foreman of the New York Post. He observes, "But you won't see much of this on TV or read about it in the papers. To an amazing degree, the Baghdad-based press corps avoids writing about or filming the friendly dealings between U.S. forces here and the local population — most likely because to do so would require them to report the extravagant expressions of gratitude that accompany every such encounter. . . . the result has been very selective reporting." (*Weekly Standard*, May 12, 2003, 12-13) I have been surprised that even some Dutch-Canadians who experienced the liberation of 1945 have not been supportive of the Iraqi war of liberation.

Perhaps the propaganda accompanying the emasculation of Canada's once-proud armed services — to convince us that this irresponsibility is in fact a move toward greater peace — has had its effect.

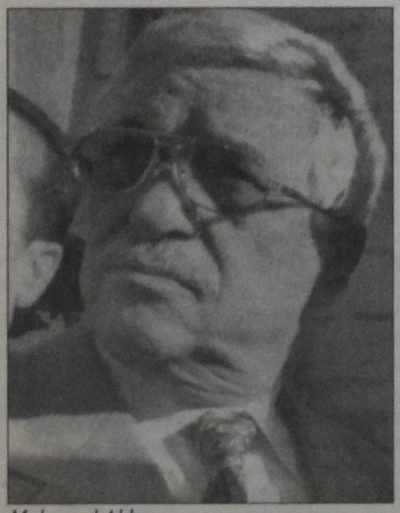
But this is not a time for nay-saying gloom but celebration. Not that the war against terror is over or that Iraq's future is guaranteed to be rosy. That was also, incidentally, true of the Netherlands after WWII — there were good reasons many immigrated.

But for now a tyrant and his regime have been deposed, the Iraqi people are liberated, and President Bush joins the gallery of those who, in the face of enormous opposition, stood firm against tyranny and for liberty.

***News Overview**...continued form page 17*

Muslims in their midst. France is home to about five million Muslims, about 7 percent of the population. However, under French law, people are not officially polled or classified according to religion, so there are no reliable figures. In an election for representatives to the country's first national council of Muslims, a fundamentalist Muslim organization unexpectedly won most of the seats.

Representatives of nearly 1,000 mosques went to the polls in mid-April to elect representatives to a council that will represent the country's Muslim population. The group that made the surprisingly strong showing, the Union of Islamic Organizations, has close links with the Muslim Brotherhood, which calls for Islamic rule via Islamic law, personal purification and political action. It is banned in Egypt and illegal in France.



Mahmoud Abbas

The interior minister, Nicolas Sarkozy, threatened today to expel any Muslim religious leader considered extremist He assured French citizens that the council would not be used to spread views that run counter to French values. He said the council would give the government "more latitude to fight against the few imams who breach the law in advocating violence or anti-Semitism. Those imams will be expelled."

Later he told the annual congress of the Union of Islamic Organizations in France that Muslim women must remove their veils for identity photographs. His remarks were drowned with boos and whistles.

In Eindhove, The Netherlands, thousands of Muslims have come to a local mosque to be indoctrinated in radical Islamist thought. Many of the lectures are held in Dutch, but they teach that compromise with the secular West is evil and that the ideal is the rule of Islamic law. The mosque and several schools associated with it receive support from wealthy backers in Saudi Arabia.

The Saturday Review reports that 80% of Imams in North American mosques are Wahhabis – members of the extreme form of Islam that has radicalized politics throughout the Middle East and that is based in Saudi Arabia.

Same-sex marriage debate

In the debate about redefining marriage to allow for same-sex marriages, liberal MP Pat O'Brien warned the House of Commons that opening the definition of marriage to allow people of the same sex to marry would also lead to legalizing polygamy. "If you're going to throw open the definition of marriage so you destroy it in essence, how do you know you can ever draw the line any place? If I want two or three wives and want that considered legal marriage, who are you to tell me I can't do that?"

Tory MP Elsie Wayne raised a storm earlier by telling gays to "shut up" about wanting to get married. "Why do they have to be out here in the public, always debating that they want to call it marriage? Why are they in parades? Why are men dressed up as women on floats?" she said. "If they are going to live together, go live together and shut up about it."

Pro-gay activists found her remarks offensive and shocking. More so than the gay pride parades?

Shock therapy

Shock therapy is making a comeback. It is more effective in treating some forms of depression than pills, say researchers in Britain. The practice fell into disuse as drugs came on the market that claimed to achieve the same results more humanely. An electrical charge is sent through the brain, resulting in some short term memory loss. Its use in treating severe depression is on the increase in Canada. Its use in Quebec, for example, has nearly doubled since 1988. In 2001, there were an estimated 7,200 treatments involving 700 patients.

What makes people happier after getting an electric shock to the brain no one knows for sure. Those who have had them, however, dread them. I've helped patients through the process and watched it done. "It's like dying," one of them told me.

Canada mother-friendly

Canada tied with the Netherlands in a study that rated countries in terms of how they nurture the physical and psychological well-being of mothers. They were tied for sixth place behind Sweden (first), Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, and Finland. The US finished 11th. Women's well-being was based on the risk of maternal mortality, the use of contraception, the percentage of births attended by trained personnel, the percentage of pregnant women with anemia, the female literacy rate and the participation of women in national government. Sweden beat out Canada for top spot because it has more women in government. I wonder whether the women who have served in the House of Commons agree that it made them better mothers.

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1953 Hamilton, Ontario June 17 Tweed, Ontario 2003

We thank the Lord for his faithfulness as we have experienced it through the marriage of our parents and grandparents these past **fifty years**. Their love, conviction, and wisdom continue to be a blessing to us all. Please join us in celebrating with them.

BERT AND DINY HIELEMA (nee Hilbers)

Syd & Evelyn Hielema, Joya & Brian, Justin, Adrian - *Sioux Center IA*
Pauline & Rick Budding, Erica, Andrea, Alex - *New Hamburg ON*
Gobind Kaur & Siri Atma Singh Khalsa, Sirisumpuran, Harkrishan - *Los Angeles CA*
Denise & John Deen, Tobin, Bronwyn, Aiden - *St. Paul MN*
Edgar & Karen Hielema - *Toronto ON*

Home address: R.R.#3, Tweed, Ontario K0K 3J0

Family and friends are invited to celebrate with us at an **OPEN HOUSE** to be held on Saturday, June 21 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Tweed and Area Heritage Center, 40 Victoria St., Tweed
Best wishes only please.

1953 June 12 2003

"Your God shall be my God." Ruth:16c

With thankfulness to God, we announce the **50th wedding anniversary** of our parents and grandparents

SAM AND WILMA MIEDEMA (nee de Graaf)

We are grateful for the blessing they have been in our lives and the lives of others.

With love from:
Adeline & John Lindemulder
Edmonton AB
Jason, Kim, Ryan
Tina & Chris Ages - *Calgary AB*
Sharon, Debbie, Calvin & Tara, Steven
Linda & John Geerts - *Hamilton ON*
Trevor, David, Wes, Mark
Louis & Sandi Miedema - *Mt. Hope ON*
Kristal & James (Makayla, Ryleigh) Dustin, Rochelle
Jeri & Clarence Batterink - *Hamilton ON*
Melanie, Kyle
Jack & Yvonne Miedema - *Calgary AB*
Sean, Daniel, Kelly
Wendy & Mark Thackway - *New Market ON*
Amanda, Teague

We invite family and friends to celebrate with us with the gift of your presence at an **Open House** on Saturday, June 14, 2003 from 2 - 4 pm at Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church 61 Mohawk Rd. W. Hamilton ON

Home address: 21 Collier Cres. Hamilton ON L9C 3T1

1953 May 27 2003
Delfshaven London
The Netherlands Ontario

"Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galations 6:2

The Lord willing, our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents

JOHN AND LUMMI HART (nee Dragt)

will celebrate **50 years of marriage**. We thank and praise the Lord for all the blessings He has given them and the example they have been to us of faithfulness in marriage and service to God.

George & Amy - *Newmarket ON*
Jennifer & Ray Flikkema and Kaly
Heidi & her fiancé Andrew Dorricott
Laura
Katie
Doreen & Larry Dunsire - *Newmarket ON*
Janis & her fiancé Darryl Zaldin and Sanderae
John and his fiancee Cheryl House
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Jamie

Open House will be held D.V. on May 31, 2003 from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Seniors Activity Club at 190 Cherryhill Circle, London ON West Side entrance and parking lot

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1953 June 17, Neerlandia 2003

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever." Psalm 136:1

With thanks to God for His faithfulness, we announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

HERMAN AND LULA GELDERMAN (nee Krikke)

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John & Pat Gelderman
Wendell Gelderman & Marian Groot
Karen Gelderman & Jack Keefe
Howard & Brenda Gelderman
16 grandchildren
Open House will be June 22, 11:30 - 2:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall at Neerlandia CRC.
Mailing address: Box 41, Neerlandia AB T0G 1R0

Herman & Lula Gelderman

Ralph & Rita Krikke

1953 June 17, Neerlandia 2003

With great joy and thankfulness to God, we announce the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents:

RALPH AND RITA KRIKKE (nee Gelderman)

Their children and spouses:
Kathleen & Phil Novikoff
Lois & Rob Houlden
Trudy & Otto Schlosser
Jocelyn & Don Shandrowsky
Karlen & Evelyn Krikke
21 grandchildren
Dad and Mom – God has richly blessed each one of us through your love for us and your love for Him.
Mailing address: PO Box 15, Vega AB T0G 2H0

1953, Neerlandia June 17 Edmonton, 2003

With thanksgiving to God for His many blessings, we plan, the Lord willing, to celebrate with

ARIE AND CECELIA KRIKKE

on their **50th Wedding Anniversary.** They were married on June 17, 1953 in a triple wedding ceremony.

Congratulations from your children:
Don & Sheryle Mc Gillivray
Christine Haarsma
Emily & Gary Goutbeck
Wendy Denomme
Warren & Cynthia Krikke
Vernon & Monique Krikke
12 grandchildren
Open House on Saturday, June 21, 2003 from 2 - 4 p.m. at Orthodox Reformed Church 11610 - 95 A St. Edmonton. Best Wishes Only.
Home address: #203 9535 - 176 ST NW Edmonton AB T5T 6C8

Arie & Cecelia Krikke

Classifieds/Advertising

Obituaries

CATHARINA MARIA EDELMAN
(nee Kruijt)

died in Langley Memorial Hospital on April 19, 2003 at the age of 83. She is survived by her beloved husband of 61 years, Arie Edelman and by her eight children, 17 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren.
Maria - *St. Catharines ON*
Tina De Vries - *Langley BC*
Adri & Henry Deobald -*Moose Jaw SK*
Ann & John vanSpankeren -*Invermere BC*
Dick & Lorraine - *Golden Prairie SK*
Dirk & Susan - *New Westminster BC*
Charlie & Marian - *Calgary AB*
Ted - *Osoyoos BC*

Marie Edelman was buried in Langley Lawn Cemetery. All eight children were pallbearers at a moving graveside ceremony on the morning of April 23. Her husband, children, and grandchildren also participated with Rev. Alex Wameke in a memorial service that afternoon in Langley First Christian Reformed Church.
Correspondence: 213-9010 158 Str.
Surrey BC V4N 5G4

The family is comforted by the words of Rev. 21:4
"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.... There shall be no more pain."

Zuidland, Z.H. Hepworth,ON
Jan 28, 1910 April 16, 2003
The Lord took home peacefully

ARENDJE ZEVENBERGEN
(Nee Vlielander)
in her 94th year.
Beloved wife of the late Jacob Zevenbergen (1991)
Beloved mother of:
Maartje & John Wolters
Coby & Bill Heyns
John & Jenny Zevenbergen
Arie & Alice Zevenbergen
Audrey & John Neerhof
Len & Dianne Zevenbergen
Gerda & Don Alexander
Vida & Bill Dove
Predeceased by a son Maarten (1969) and daughter Jane (1983)
Dear Grandmother of:
36 grandchildren, 68 great-grandchildren and 2 great-great-grandchildren.
Correspondence Address:
Mrs. John Neerhof, RR #3
Chatsworth ON N0H 1G0

1 Corinthians 13

April 28, 1912 May 1, 2003
Burgwerd Duncan
Friesland British Columbia
The Netherlands Canada

GEESKE POSTMA
(nee Sijtsma)

After 91 years of life, the Lord has taken our mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother home to be with Him forever. She was predeceased by her loving husband Jaring in 1993. She is survived by her loving children:

Chris & Jennie Postma -*Crofton BC*
Steve & Coby Postma -*Grand Forks BC*
Grace & Tony Millenaar -*Edmonton AB*
Betty & Bert Visscher - *Duncan BC*
Lucas & Faith Postma - *St. Albert BC*
Henry Postma - *Duncan BC*
Trincy & Anko Buwalda -*Edmonton AB*
Pieter & Betty Postma - *Duncan, BC*
Laura Postma - *Chemainus BC*
and 34 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren.

A Service of Celebration was held on May 6, 2003 in the Duncan Christian Reformed Church with Pastor Darren Colyn officiating.

Correspondence Address:
Betty Visscher
#315 Bundock Street
Duncan, B.C., V9L 3N9

Birthday

Westbroek Petrolia
The Netherlands Ontario
1913 May 21 2003

"Blessed is (s)he
whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord our God"
Ps. 146:5
We thank and praise God for His grace and faithfulness in the life of our mother as we celebrate her **90th Birthday.**

Metje van Barneveld-van den Broek

Happy birthday, Mom, Oma, and Great-Oma!
May God continue to be close to you and keep you ever in His arms.
Your grateful children:
Georgina & Wytze DeRoos
Henry & Mary van Barneveld
Bill & Clara van Barneveld
John & Jan van Barneveld
and your grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Our mother is the widow of Govert van Barneveld, Jurjen Meyer, and Chris Verstraete.
Home address:
Lambton Meadowview Villa
RR #4, Petrolia ON N0N 1R0

Personal Ad

Widow lady, 65 + would like to meet a sincere Christian man.
Reply to: **File # 2721 1 Hiscott St**
St Catharines ON L2R 1C7

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St. Catharines - Share house with Christian young person. Ideal for students. Available May 1, 2003. On bus route and close to Fairview Mall. Call Anita at: 905-684-5806.

FOR RENT: cozy one bedroom **cottage** in **Vineland**, all appliances, $575/month plus utilities. Available June 1. Call: 905-562-4622

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* Dry goods
*Giftware

Interested parties contact:
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17409 107 Avenue Suite 100
Edmonton AB T5S 1E5
Fax: 1-780-484-4744

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Effective January 1, new rules provide an immediate charitable receipt of approx. 20% - 25% for all charitable gift annuities. *Our Rates have not changed.* If you've been thinking about getting a quotation, this is the time to do it! No obligation, call or write today!

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45 Harriet St. Toronto M4L 2G1
Ph: 416-410-4244 Fax: 416-465-6367
www.linkcharity.ca info@linkcharity.ca

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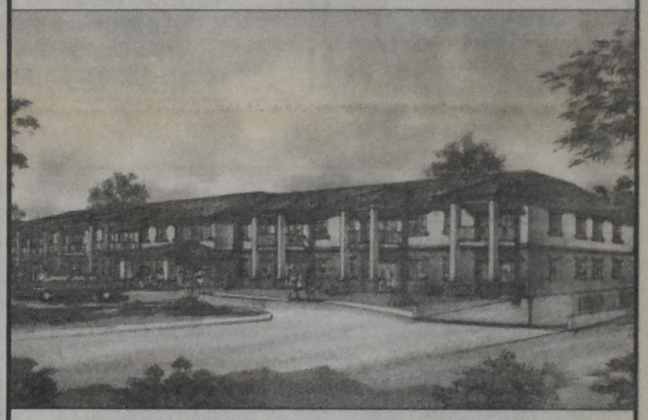
Come and view our **Model Suite** and Sales Office located at 261 Stone Church Road East, **Hamilton**, Ontario. Model Suite open Tuesdays to Thursdays from 10 am to 12 noon and 2 pm to 4 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am to 12 noon. Other times by appointment, please call 905-383-0754.

"Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations" – Psalm 90:1

Quinte Christian Retirement Homes Inc.
Presents



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(next to Ebenezer CRC)

Price Range: $ 122,000.00 - $169,500.00
1 & 2 bedroom units available
Parking Garage or Outdoor Parking Option
Occupancy slated for Sept. 1, 2003
For more information:
Call
613-392-1818 (John Van Huizen)

Hollandse Dag
June 11 9:30 a.m.
1st CRC Kingston, Ont.
Spreker: Bert Hielema
We will serve coffe & goodies at 9:30.
Bring your own lunch.

Advertising

Job Opportunities/Miscellaneous

Teacher Wanted

WYOMING, Ontario
John Knox Christian School needs a part-time teacher for the intermediate grades beginning in September. Please contact us if you are keen to challenge students to excel, enjoy being part of an encouraging staff and appreciate working with a supportive school community. Send your resume, statement of fatih, summary of experience and educational philosophy to:

Mr. Ymko Boersma, Principal
John Knox Christian School
Box 81
4738 Confederation Line
Wyoming, Ontario N0N 1T0
Phone 519-845-3112
Fax: 519-845-1404
email: yboersma@ebtech.net

The **van Ruler** series:
"Why go to church"
is now available on our website:
www.christiancourier.ca
(click on Feature Articles)

To **discuss topics** with fellow readers,
use our **Forum**

Position Available:
Administrative Assistant

The Burlington office of the **Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)** has a full-time opening for an **Administrative Assistant in the Communications Office**. Responsibilities include providing administrative support for the Director of Communications, writing and editing, as well as detailed database management. Qualified individuals must have demonstrated written communication skills and a concern for detail

Associate's degree with three to five years of experience in executive-level secretarial or administrative assistant position is required. Excellent computer skills using Microsoft Word, Excel and Access necessary; familiarity with and ability to use the Internet and PowerPoint skills would be preferred as well. The successful candidate must be a self-starter, able to work independently and to multi-task. A working knowledge of Christian Reformed Church practice and structure is an asset. In keeping with our Equal Opportunity policy, we encourage applicants from ethnic (racial) and first nations communities

A complete position description is available upon request. For consideration, submit a copy of your resume and a letter stating your interest by May 30, 2003 to:

Director of Personnel
Christian Reformed Church in North America
3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1
Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 Canada
Fax: 905-336-8344 Email: colemann@crcna.org

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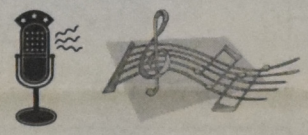

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WESTMOUNT CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH,
in beautiful **Strathroy**, Ontario, is searching for a **Director of Music (part time)**. We are praying and looking for a Director of Music who: is able to lead worship on a keyboard, is familiar with traditional hymns and contemporary songs, is willing to lead - be part of - a praise team and is comfortable in team ministry.
For more information, please contact **Renata Nydam**, church office (519-245-2430) Email address: **wcrc@sympatico.ca**
Mailing address: **405 Drury Lane, Strathroy, ON, N6G 3G2.**

Redeemer University College welcomes applications for possible part-time faculty positions in the following departments:

Biology
Chemistry
Philosophy
Physical Science
Social Work
Psychology

Applicants should possess a Master's degree or Doctorate, and should be in agreement with the Reformed Christian basis of the University. Please consult www.redeemer.on.ca for more details.

Deadline: June 15, 2003 or when filled.

Direct applications and three reference letters to:
Dr. Jacob P. Ellens
Vice-President (Academic), Redeemer University College
777 Garner Rd. E., Ancaster, Ontario, Canada L9K 1J4
Fax: 905-648-2134 E-mail: jellens@redeemer.on.ca
All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority. R an equal opportunity employer.

REDEEMER University College

DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY TEAMS

Christian Reformed Home Missions (CRHM), an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), is seeking an experienced Director of Ministry Teams to provide leadership and support for developing and multiplying mission-focused churches, and faith communities. This will be accomplished by providing overall leadership, coordination, and support to CRHM ethnic and area ministry teams and leaders and oversight to CRHM grants programs both in the US and Canada.

The qualified candidate will be a theologically competent Christian leader with demonstrated competence in vision casting, leadership, team building, coaching, coordination, administration, and oral and written communication. Strong relational skills, including cross-cultural sensitivities and a demonstrable commitment to racial reconciliation and enfolding and empowering persons of color within the CRCNA are an asset.

Master's degree or equivalent with a minimum of five years of ministry leadership experience is required. Membership in good standing in the CRCNA is required. An ordained minister of the Word in the CRCNA is an asset. Applicants must be eligible to work in the US.

In keeping with our Equal Opportunity Policy, persons who are members of an ethnic community are encouraged to apply.

For more information, see www.crcna.org. A detailed job description is available upon request.

For consideration, submit your resume and letter of interest by **May 30, 2003** to:

Director of Personnel
Christian Reformed Church in North America
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560-0500
(616) 224-5881/FAX (616) 224-5896
Email: colemann@crcna.org

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

June 8	A **dutch service** will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr Ref church 3 p.m. Rev. John Hellinga preaching.
June 11	**HOLLANDSE DAG** First CRC **Kingston** Ont. 10 a.m. Spreker: Bert Hielema *"Rust in een tijd van onrust"* For more information, call: 613-546-5615
June 11	**HOLLANDSE DAG** 10 o'clock **Moorfield** Community Center. Samenzang, voordrachten, speciale muziek. For information, call H. Rumph at 519-638-2053
June 21,22	Rehoboth Fellowship Christian Reformed Church, **Etobicoke**, Ont., 50th Anniversary. All invited to an open house on Sat. 2-5 p.m. and special service Sunday at 10 a.m. See ad this issue.
June 28, 29	All Nations CRC, **Halifax,** hosts 50th Anniversary celebration. In conjunction with Pier 21 75th celebrations. Pancake Brunch, Sat. & Sunday worship celebration. Call 902-429-7136 or visit www. allnationscrc.org See ad in this issue for details.
Oct 10-14	The **Transcona** CRC (Winnipeg, Manitoba) will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary with praise, thanksgiving & fellowship. For info call: Bev Steendam at 204-853-2150 or jsteenda@mts.net
Dec 5,6,7	**Bethel** CRC **of Lacombe, Alberta**, 50th anniversary - weekend of praise, thanksgiving and fellowship All former and present members and friends are invited. For info, call: Eleanor Wildeboer at 403-782-2602 or e-mail wilelwildeboer@aol.com (See ad Mar 17 issue)

THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

English Radio: *Back to God Hour*

FROM COAST TO COAST

Television: *Primary Focus*

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Burns Lake – CFLD	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos – CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni – CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George – CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton – CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers – CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland – CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon – CJIB	9:30 pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks – CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray – CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River – CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton – CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock – CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan – CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn – CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona – CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach – CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg – CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan – CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham – CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances - FM	7:30 am	93
Guelph – CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton – CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing – CKAP	7:00 am	580
London – CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa – CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound – CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke – CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia – CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford – CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Windsor – CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham – CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John – CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown – CFCY	7:00 am	630

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater – CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby – CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax – CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool – CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville – CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton – CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow – CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne – CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney – CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth – CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor – CFAB	8:30 am	1450

Check your local listings for cable outlets airing *Primary Focus*

ALBERTA
Lethbridge – CJIL
Thursday – 9:00 am
Saturday – 2:00 am

ONTARIO – CTS
Saturday – 7:30 pm

PACIFIC – BC
2 pm Sunday.

MOUNTAIN –AB
3 pm Sunday

CENTRAL – SK & MB - 4 pm Sun.

EASTERN – ON & PQ – 5 pm Sun.

ATLANTIC – NB, NS, PEI - 6pm Sun

NFLD – 6:30 Sun.

KIDS CORNER RADIO
Drayton Valley AB – CIBW 8:30 am Sunday 92.9 FM
Nordegg AB – CHBW 8:30 am Sunday 93.9 FM
Rocky Mtn. House AB – CHBW 8:30 am Sunday 94.5 FM
Prince Rupert BC – CJRN 10 am Saturday 100.7 FM

Our Address: 3475 Mainway PO Box 5070 Stn LCD1 Burlington ON L7R 3Y8

A dutch service will be held in the Ancaster Chr Ref church June 8 at 3 pm Rev John Hellinga preaching

THE LIVING WORD
Sermons for reading services
Contact:
R. VanderPloeg, Secr./Treas.
37 Brick Pond Lane
Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1

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No pets please

Events

ALL NATIONS CRC is hosting a **50th Anniversary** celebration of God's faithfulness with Christian Reformed Ministry to Dutch Immigrants. This celebration coincides with the 75th commemorative anniversary of Dutch Immigration at the National Historical Site **Pier 21** in **Halifax**. Join us at All Nations CRC: Sat. **June 28th** 9 am Pancake Brunch and Sun. June 29th 10am Worship Celebration.

For more information call **902-429-7136** or **www.allnationscrc.org.**

50th Anniversary
Rehoboth Fellowship Christian Reformed Church
"the Lord has made room for us"
800 Burnhamthorpe Road, Etobicoke

Rehoboth, which began as the Annette CRC on January 1, 1953 was joined in 1989 by the Fellowship CRC to become Rehoboth Fellowship.

We invite all members, former members, pastors and friends to join us for an open house to celebrate God's faithfulness to us on Saturday **June 21, 2003** from 2:00 to 5:00 pm and a service of celebration on Sunday **June 22** at 10:00 am. Please feel free to call us for additional information at ***416-622-9647***

We could really use your investment now.

CRC EXTENSION FUND

"...serving Christian Reformed churches and Christian schools since 1970"

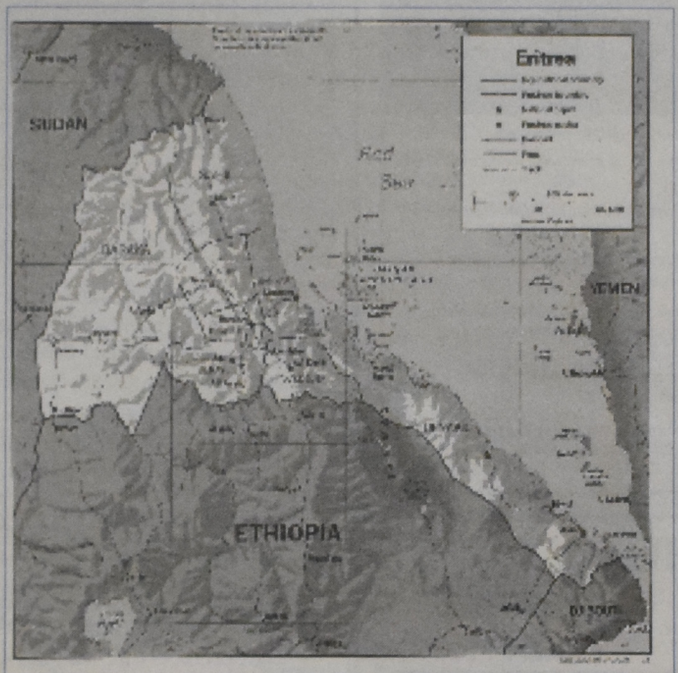
Your funds will be invested in Christian Reformed Church and Christian school building projects in Canada.

RATES TO JUNE 30, 2003.
Ext. fund: we pay 4.75%
RRSP: you earn approx. 4.75%
Call: 416-461-1207
Write: Christian Reformed Extension Fund
45 Harriet St., Toronto, ON M4L 2G1
Fax: 416-465-6367

News

Eritrean police break up prayer meeting make arrests

Eritrea (Compass) — Eritrean security police arrested two full-time evangelists and another 54 members of the Rema Church in early May in Asmara, hauling them off to a local police station for holding "illegal prayer meetings" in two homes of their members. The prayer meetings were in progress when security forces raided the homes about 6 p.m., forcing the Protestant believers to stop their worship.



The jailed Christians, 21 women and 35 men, remained under detention in Kahawta, where local sources said they were undergoing "severe punishment" at the hands of police authorities. Since mid February, Eritrea's local police have subjected more than 300 independent Protestants to heavy beatings, humiliation and death threats for holding religious meetings without government permission.

Most of the banned churches are newly formed Pentecostal and charismatic groups emerging out of local renewal movements begun within the Orthodox Church, although the list includes the long-established Seventh-day Adventist and Presbyterian Evangelical churches. Since last May, the Eritrean government has revoked official status for all religious groups in the country except the four "recognized" religions: Orthodox Christian, Muslim, Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran.

The charismatic Rema Church has formed congregations in cities and towns across the country. They have been harassed repeatedly in recent months.

Rema Church and 11 other independent Protestant denominations have been refused official status for more than a year by the Eritrean government. Fifty of their Asmara church members arrested during a New Year's celebration were jailed for 10 days. Further incidents were reported in February and March.

Conscripted for military service

Nine days after 56 other Protestant church members in towns of northern Eritrea were allegedly conscripted for military service, their church leaders in Asmara were reportedly braced for possible arrest as well. A total of 36 Kale Hiwot Church members and 20 from the Full Gospel Church were taken from their homes or workplaces April 29 by military police, who claimed they were taking the Christians to the Sawa Military Training Center.

As the men and women were led away, their captors taunted them in front of their families and colleagues, declaring that their church's elders were "next" to be apprehended. "Their whereabouts is still un-known," a church representative said, "and their imprisonment has created fear among their church leaders."

Meanwhile, at least 77 Eritrean soldiers, 15 of them women, remain jailed in a military prison in Assab for refusing to deny their Pentecostal beliefs and return to the dominant Orthodox Church. Most have been incarcerated for more than a year, and all are being denied contact with relatives or friends.

At the Assab military prison, the Protestant men and women have reportedly been put in 44-gallon drums and then rolled in front of their fellow prisoners to torture them. Some are partially paralyzed from these and other assaults, and others suffer severe eye defects and mental imbalance. Among the women, several have been sexually abused by the prison staff.

In an incident in the capital city over Orthodox Easter weekend, two members of the government-recognized Evangelical Lutheran Church were arrested and held in detention for three days. Following a tradition long observed on the eve of Easter by Eritrea's Lutheran Christians, a group of young church members took a guitar onto the streets of central Asmara on Saturday night, April 26, to sing hymns about Christ's resurrection and were promptly arrested.

Military police also invaded work places and private homes to arrest 56 members of independent Pentecostal churches in the northern-most province of Sahel. The military swoop, which occurred during normal working hours on April 29, was justified as "conscription for military service." But according to fellow church members of the forced conscripts, most of the 16 women and 40 men picked up had already completed their mandatory military service. Many of those conscripted were teachers, nurses and professionals.

The government formally denied last week that any religious persecution exists in Eritrea.

A Freedom House report issued in April listed Eritrea as one of the world's "most repressive regimes." The report said the Eritrean government's policy in the human rights arena appeared to have been forged by years of struggle against outside occupiers, together with an "austere attachment to Marxist principles."

Cooking injera in Eritrea. Eritrea is a small country on the Horn of Africa. Injera is a special kind of bread eaten in Eritrea. It is similar to a large, flat pancake and is made from teff (a local grain crop), wheat or sorghum. The grains are ground into flour, made into a sloppy dough, left for two days to ferment, and then fried in a large pan. Injera may be eaten with vegetable stew or zigni (a spicy meat stew), and here Golunge is cooking it over a wood stove.

News Digest

Nice Vikings

TORONTO – British children are being taught a sanitized version of European history, in which Vikings are portrayed as peace-loving traders, contends Dr. Yasemin Soysal of the European Sociological Association. "Children are not being given the full picture of their history," she said, according to The London Observer and the Globe and Mail. For instance, in early editions of the book *From Cavemen to Vikings*, the Vikings are referred to as "fierce raiders [who] began to attack our coasts." But in the 1994 edition, they are described as "Danes [who] besides being farmers, were much better at trading than Saxons. The Danes and Saxons settled down together and Saxon England became one rich and peaceful kingdom."

A laughing disgrace

PINE BLUFF, Arkansas (AP) – Police say they aren't sure what charge is appropriate for a man arrested after tellers laughed him out of a bank he tried to rob. The man entered a branch of the Bank of America recently with a trash bag in one hand and the other in a pocket. "Put the money in the bag," he demanded. Instead, one of the two tellers told him the bank was out of money, and the other teller laughed and offered the man deposit slips. She told police that made the intruder angry, and he left without any money in his bag. Minutes after tellers alerted authorities, a sheriff's deputy arrested a suspect after witnesses in the bank identified him as the man with the trash bag. No weapon was found, and the man at the bank never threatened anybody, so police are unsure how the case will be handled. "Technically, it could be robbery," said police spokesman Robert Rawlinson.

Cooking and driving

OSLO, Norway (Independent Online) – Kyrre Olaf Johansen doesn't bother with drive-through restaurants. He does his own cooking beneath the hood of his Volvo. "A long drive is enough to cook up lamb chops, but for the shorter trips, I can cook hot dogs for the kids." Johansen, 40, who has cooked appetizers and entrees using his car for the past decade, said that whatever he cooks comes out tender and full of flavor. He avoids the smell of exhaust fumes by wrapping his cuisine in tinfoil before putting it onto the exhaust manifold, or valve cover. Volvo officials said the automaker doesn't offer guidelines for using its cars as rolling ovens. Volvo spokesperson said, "I've never heard of anyone who cooks on an engine." But he appreciates Johansen's taste. "If Johansen drives a car like that, the food has to be good."